

HOPE FOR OVERCOMING FAMILY OF ORIGIN DEFICIENCIES

A THESIS

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## DEDICATION

Philippians 4:13 (NIV)

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

**To my wife,** Patricia, no one could ask for a more supportive companion, lover and best friend. You have always encouraged me to aim higher. We have achieved much together because of your vision, adventurous spirit, and calling to ministry. I could have easily put this thesis on hold if you hadn't said, "Go for it!" Thanks so much!

**To my sons,** Ryan and Shaun, I am very proud of the men you have become. You have always brought joy to my heart! You represent the 6<sup>th</sup> generation in our family to know Jesus Christ!

**To my parents,** Robert and Hazel Porter, thank you for your constant prayers, and for modeling a Godly marriage and family life for me. These will forever be my reference points!

**To my older brother,** Steve, you always blazed the trail ahead of me in academics and sports, setting an example that I wanted to follow. I've always looked up to you with great admiration!

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## **ABSTRACT**

The thesis of this project is that there is hope for overcoming family of origin deficiencies through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the application of Scripture, and an integration of psychological theories and therapeutic principles.

The psychological theories that are integrated for this thesis include Family Systems Theory, Structural Family Therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy.

The thesis was applied to a young married couple with the use of the Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis, The Personality Self-Portrait by Multi-Health Systems, and the Prepare/Enrich Inventory assessment tools.

The results were used to help the married couple understand their respective family backgrounds; appreciate one another's personality differences; improve communication and conflict resolution skills; and increase their level of marital satisfaction.

## Introduction

Many of the emotional, psychological and relational problems people experience as adults are rooted in deficiencies they encountered in their families of origin. According to *The New World Dictionary, Third College Edition* (Neufeldt and Guralnik, 1991, p. 361), a "deficiency" is defined as, "The quality or state of being deficient; absence of something essential; incompleteness; a shortage."

Even in the best of homes, parents are not perfect so they will not always provide everything a child needs. In some households, conditions can be so unhealthy that scars are carried deep within a child's psyche into adulthood. Added to this is the fact that humanity lives in a fallen state, we are easily deceived, we are prone to make unwise decisions, and we all have the tendency to be egocentric. Despite all of this, the thesis of this research is that there is hope to overcome family of origin deficiencies through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the application of Scripture, and an integration of psychological theories and therapeutic techniques. Chapter 1 looks at the theological and Biblical worldview as it relates to God, creation, man's nature, the "fall" and God's original intent for marriage. We will also



look at other Scriptures that address contemporary issues such as divorce, human sexuality, and the relationship between the husband and wife. Chapter 2 is a review of the pertinent literature for this research. In Chapter 3 we will integrate four secular psychological theories into an eclectic approach that promotes healing in marriage and family relationships. Chapter 4 analyzes a family system and attempts to identify problematic areas that keep a couple from healthy functioning. Chapter 5 discusses the treatment plan that was used with the case study family. These five chapters support the thesis that there is hope for overcoming family of origin deficiencies.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Biblical and Theological Foundations For Marriage and Family**

In order to have a complete understanding of marriage and family life, Christian therapists must build their theory and application upon a foundation of truth that is revealed in the Old and New Testaments. There are over 500 references to the subject of marriage, family life, and husband/wife relationships in the Bible. There are numerous examples of relationship dynamics between married couples as well as family dynamics. These relationships are instructive both for the therapist and for married couples. In the discussion that follows we will look at the creation account as revealed in Genesis 1-3 to discover God's plan for individuals, married couples, and families. We will see how Jesus applied Genesis 1-3 in his discussion of marriage and divorce in Matthew 19. Next we will discover how the Apostle Paul applied Genesis 1-3 in his discussion concerning the attitudes and actions married couples are to show to one another in Ephesians 5:22-33. We will also look at 1 Corinthians 7:1-17 to discover Paul's instructions on a variety of topics including singleness, sex, divorce and remarriage, and marriage

between believers and nonbelievers. We will complete this section with discussion on human sexuality as presented in various places in the Bible. The Biblical framework will be foundational in the development of a theoretical approach to therapy, and an in-depth case study of a family system.

### ***Creation and Marriage in Genesis 1-3***

Genesis 1-3 answers many questions as they relate to the origin of man and created matter, the institution of marriage, male and female interaction, the "fall" of man, family dynamics and God's redemptive plan. The first reference to Adam and Eve being husband and wife is mentioned in the opening chapters of Genesis. Man and woman aren't just cohabitating or close acquaintances who occasionally share a sexual union. They have a committed, unique, exclusive and blessed relationship with one another. Genesis 1:26-31 (New International Version) reads:

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of

the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

29 Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food.

30 And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so.

31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

From this account we understand that human-kind was created by God in his image and likeness. Therefore humans are unique compared to other life forms and they have been given authority by God to rule over them. In addition, God created two distinct genders - male and female - both in the animal kingdom and in the human domain. He blessed the male and female humans and commissioned them to be fruitful and fill the earth with their offspring. Then God declared that all of His creation was good. In bearing God's "image" and "likeness" humankind has a mind, soul and spirit. They have emotions, desires, and a will. They have been endowed with the ability to create things out of the substances God first created.

Next, we discover that Adam was given authority over the animals with responsibility for their stewardship,

but unlike all the other animals, Adam was alone and in need of a companion similar to himself. Genesis 2:18-25

(NIV) reveals the creation of Eve:

18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."

24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The woman was described as "a helper suitable" for Adam.

According to *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Genesis*,

Vol. 2 (Zondervan Publishing House, 1990) there are

several interpretations of the meaning of "suitable

helper". The commentator asks the question, "In what

sense was she to be a helper?" He answers:

Augustine suggested that she was to help in the task

of bringing forth children (Delitzsch, p.120). According to Delitzsch, she was to help "till and keep" the garden (ibid.). Westermann seeks a more comprehensive interpretation: the woman is to provide "support in a wide sense" (p.309). Although each of these approaches to the question has validity, in light of the importance of the blessing ("Be fruitful and increase") in the creation of the man and the woman in 1:28, it appears most likely that the "help" envisioned is tied to the bearing of children. Further support for such an interpretation comes from the narrative of the next chapter. Not only does the woman's judgment relate specifically to her role in bearing children (3:16), but also in the promise of the "offspring" (*sera'*, lit., "seed," 3:15) there is an apparent wordplay on the woman's role as a helper.

Three trends emerge from this discussion. The woman was to be a helper by bearing children. Secondly, she was to be a helper by providing general support in all areas of life for Adam. Lastly, Eve was to be a helper in tilling and keeping the garden.

Some authors would say that Eve was given a subservient role to Adam as he was created first and placed in authority over her. In order to fully appreciate the relationship Eve was to have with Adam requires that we understand the meaning of two Hebrew words that are cited in Genesis 2:18 in reference to Eve. The words are *'ezer* and *neged* translated "helper suitable" in the NIV. Balswick and Balswick (1999a,

p.38-39) provide some insight for the word usage of

'ezer:

According to Tribble (1987), helper in the original language ('ezer) refers to God as the helper of humankind fifteen of the sixteen times it is used in the Bible. This verse (Genesis 2:18) is the one exception in which it is used to describe the relationship between human beings, namely Eve and Adam. Tribble goes on to suggest that even the most inventive exegete would have to make a huge stretch to conclude that God, as our 'ezer, is subordinate to humankind and therefore beyond such an interpretation when it comes to subordination between the man and woman. It makes no sense to conclude that Genesis 2:18 implies subordination between the man and the woman.

The second Hebrew word that is important for our discussion is the word "neged". The word means "counterpart" or "mate". The woman was to be a counterpart or mate suitable for Adam and also, he for Eve. They both were suited to meet one another's needs. We also note in Genesis 2:18-25 that Eve was distinctly female - named "woman" by Adam - but similar to Adam as he exclaimed, "she is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh". The writer of this thesis would agree with Tribble's logic and conclusion when discussing Eve's position in relationship to Adam. They were co-equals and companions who needed one another in order to experience a satisfying life. For without Eve, Adam could not bring forth seed and without Eve, Adam would have a

difficult time caring for the garden. Ultimately without Eve, Adam would be alone with no companion to share paradise.

Genesis 2:24 states that at the appropriate time a man and woman are to differentiate from their families of origin and be united to one another to become one flesh. The sacredness of this one flesh relationship is further amplified by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20 where he argues that the person who joins himself in a sexual relationship with a prostitute becomes one with her in body and in so doing they sin against their own bodies. The body is a temple for the Holy Spirit therefore, we are to honor God with our body. Again, Genesis 2:24 is the first place in Scripture where the man and woman are called "husband" and "wife" which highlights their special relationship. They are to bring forth through their sexual relationship the product of their union - a child in their likeness -as they share a "one flesh" union. We further observe that Adam and Eve were both naked and felt no shame.

### ***The Effects of the Fall of Humankind***

Sadly, the "good" creation was marred by Adam and Eve's disobedience to God's command when they were



deceived by the serpent, Satan, and sinned. The fall of mankind is described in Genesis 3:1-7 (NIV):

- 1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"
- 2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden,
- 3 but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"
- 4 "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman.
- 5 "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
- 6 When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
- 7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

From this account we understand that Adam and Eve's eyes were opened as a result of their disobedience. Their relationship with one another and with God was forever altered. They became conscious of their nakedness so they were ashamed. They hid from each other and also from God.

The unique fellowship Adam and Eve had experienced with God was now broken. Genesis 3:8-13 (NIV) describes this tragedy:

- 8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the

cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Immediately after breaking God's command Adam and Eve experienced fear for the first time in their lives. When Adam was confronted with his sin, instead of taking responsibility for what he had done, he blamed his wife but also implied that God was at fault, for God had created Eve and given her to him in the first place. When Eve was confronted with her sin, she blamed the serpent who had deceived her. Fear is still an emotion that affects our human relationships. Because of their sin, the man and woman were cursed, so they struggled the rest of their lives. Genesis 3:14-19 (NIV) records this curse:

14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."  
16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."  
17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.  
18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.  
19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

The curse directly affected the relationship that Adam and Eve shared with one another. First, to Eve, God said, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." Perhaps the curse is that the woman will desire a close relationship with her husband but will find deep intimacy and closeness difficult to achieve with him because of his fallen state. The man will experience difficulty with this, thus he will "rule over" her by being distant or domineering. He will feel his autonomy is threatened by her fallen state so he will attempt to rule over her overtly or covertly.

Despite the effects of the fall of man, God still demonstrated grace to Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:15). He clothed them and promised that the woman's seed would

bruise the head of the serpent. Genesis 3:15 is the first reference to the coming of the Messiah and God's redemptive plan for mankind. Even though God bestows grace upon the first married couple, still his original creation is marred by sin, therefore people continue to struggle in their relationships.

In addition to Adam and Eve, we observe conflict in the life of their first children, Cain and Abel. Cain kills Abel out of jealousy. Sin and dysfunction is passed from generation-to-generation in the family system. For example, lying and deception are passed through the family line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Relational triangles and coalitions develop between Jacob and his mother Rachael, against his father, Isaac and his brother, Esau. In turn, Isaac and Esau become allied against Rachael and Jacob. They manipulate and deceive one another as they seek to obtain God's blessing. Jacob and Esau experience a "cut off" in their relationship but are restored in later years.

Abraham's lineage is an example of how the family system in one generation can influence the attitudes and behaviors of future generations. Despite the curse, God promises that a son will be born of the woman who will come and crush the serpents head. Christians believe

that this is the first reference to the coming of the Messiah - Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ died upon the cross for our sins and was raised for our justification. Therefore, humankind can be forgiven for their sins, have their relationship with God restored, and they can be empowered by the indwelling Holy Spirit to live a new life. A husband, wife and family can experience a redemptive relationship with God and with one another.

### ***Divorce and Remarriage***

Genesis 1-3 is foundational for understanding the origin and institution of marriage, the effects of sin upon marriage, and God's redemptive plan. It is important to notice how Jesus interpreted and applied Genesis 1-3 in the New Testament. Matthew 19:3-9 (NIV) reads:

3 Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

4 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?

6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

7 "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

8 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.

9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if a man could divorce his wife for any and every reason, he cited the Genesis account of creation. Jesus affirmed that God had created both male and female. They were to leave their families of origin and be united to one another to become one flesh. Jesus declared that God had joined the man and woman together therefore no one should separate them through a divorce. He explained that when a man divorces his wife - except for marital unfaithfulness - he commits adultery so he also causes her to commit adultery. The Pharisees cited the Law of Moses which made divorce possible through a certificate of divorce, but Jesus said that this was only practiced because people had hardened their hearts toward one another. Obviously Jesus affirmed the sacredness of marriage and showed us that we need divine love to soften our hearts if we are to maintain a loving relationship with our spouse.

In addition to our Lord's words on divorce, the Apostle Paul sheds light on the subject of divorce and remarriage in 1 Corinthians 7:10-17 (NIV):

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but

the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.

11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.

13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.

15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.

We are instructed not to divorce, but if we cannot get along, separating from one another is an acceptable practice. The goal should be to reconcile to one's spouse. In addition, when an unbeliever is married to a believer, they must not divorce if the unbeliever wants to stay. Why? The unbeliever is sanctified by the believer. Paul then says if an unbeliever wants to leave he should be allowed to leave. The believer is not bound in such circumstances because God has called husband and wife to live in peace with one another.

It is this writer's opinion that the New Testament authors were strict concerning divorce because of the effect it has upon the family system and society. A recent landmark longitudinal study by Wallerstein, Lewis, and Blakeslee (2000) supports this assumption. They studied children of divorce over a period of twenty-five years. They found that children absorb the pain of divorce so it affects them throughout their adult years and subsequent relationships. In addition to a multitude of emotional and behavioral problems, many of them grew up to struggle in their own marriages and to experience divorces themselves.

The writer of this research acknowledges that the marriage union is blessed of God so the ideal is for one man and one woman to live in a covenant relationship for life. However, the reality is that divorce happens! How then should we respond to people who experience the brokenness of divorce? Balswick and Balswick (1999) remind us that we live in a sinful world in which people fail in many aspects of their lives, not just in marriage. Often the church is quick to offer grace to people who have failed in business, their career, or in education, but we are slow to offer the same grace to those who have failed in marriage. Our model is Jesus



Christ who did not condemn the woman at the well for her five unsuccessful marriages, but offered redemption and a new beginning (John 4). The Balswick's (1999b, p. 323) argue that the well-being of the people involved is more important than the structure of marriage. The Christian message is that forgiveness and restoration are available to all who ask. The church is a healing community for those suffering from divorce but also to the victims of divorce who are the children or abused.

### ***Submission and Sacrificial Love***

The New Testament is rich in practical teaching for developing healthy relationships. A familiar place to start is Ephesians 5:22-33 which addresses the attitude and actions a Christian husband and wife are to show to one another. Submission is required of both husband and wife as they are both commanded to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Ephesians 5:21). Two times the wife is commanded to submit to her husband. First she is to submit to him "as to the Lord" because the "husband is the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church" (Ephesians 5:22-23). Then she is admonished to submit to her husband in everything just as the church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:24). In order to understand the meaning of "submission", we must first

observe how the word is used in various places in the Scriptures. We must also understand the culture and audience to whom this letter was written. In addition, we must comprehend what it means for the husband to be "the head of the wife as Christ is head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior" (Ephesians 5:21).

First, what does the word "submit" mean as it is used throughout the Bible? According *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Ephesians, Vol.11* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) the verb "to submit" (*hypotasso*) occurs twenty-three times in this section. It denotes subordination to those considered worthy of respect either because of their inherent qualities or more often, because of the position they hold (Wood, 1978, p. 75). Other definitions include, "to place oneself under; to obey; to subordinate oneself to another." We are told to submit ourselves to Christ, to God, to the governing authorities, younger men to the older men, and slaves unto their masters. In each context it implies that submission and obedience are a choice. We choose to submit to those placed in authority over us. We subjugate our desires to their will. Does this mean that the wife does not exercise any leadership in the home? Does this indicate that she is not assertive or

intelligent? Might this indicate that her husband makes all of the decisions for the family? By no means! We can understand how submission works as we consider the metaphor of Christ and the church. The church willingly submits to Christ because he is the Savior. We submit to Christ because we know that he loves us. As 1 John 4:19 says, "We love because he first loved us" (NIV). Thus the wife chooses to submit to her husband as he demonstrates his love for her by placing her needs above his own.

What does the husband's submission look like? The husband is to love his wife "as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless" (Ephesians 5:25-27). The word for "love" that is used throughout this section is "agape" which is defined as sacrificial love. Christ sacrificed his life for sinners so the husband is to sacrifice his self-interest for the sake of his wife. The husband does this so she can become holy and blameless. In addition, the husband is admonished to "love his wife as his own body". She was not to be treated as a piece of property as was the custom in

Paul's day. She was to be regarded as an extension of her husband's personality and so part of him (Wood, 1978, p. 77). "He who loves his wife loves himself" (Ephesians 5:28-30). Just as the husband cares for his own body he is to care for his wife since they form a "one flesh" relationship. In Paul's culture, this was a radical teaching. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* says that in Greco-Roman society it was recognized that wives had obligations to their husbands, but not vice versa. Christianity introduced a revolutionary approach to marriage that equalized the rights of wives and husbands and established the institution of marriage upon a firmer foundation than ever before. One word summed up the role of the wife - "submit" - and one word did the same for the husband - "love" (Wood, 1978, p. 76).

Paul goes on to teach that Christ is "head" of the church because he gave his life for the church. Likewise the husband is "head" of the wife because he gives his life for her. The wife will respect her husband when she knows that he sacrifices his own self-interest to meet her needs and those of the family. In practice, if a husband genuinely loves his wife he will notice her needs and he will listen to her preferences. They will make

decisions jointly that best serve the greater good in their relationship and for their family.

This Scripture is silent on several issues that have an affect upon husband and wife relationships. They say nothing about a wife working outside of the home. They do not discuss the roles a husband and wife are to take within their home, other than the physiological fact that women are the ones who birth the children. The writer of this thesis believes that God does not give definitive guidance on male/female roles because they are culturally defined or are specifically negotiated by each couple as they harmonize their giftedness together. Supporting this concept is Olson & Olson (2000) who teach that the roles a couple fill in a marriage need to be based upon their individual giftedness and personal interests, then the work load is shared so that both husband and wife are satisfied.

Ephesians 5 does not identify which marital partner is the primary decision-maker or who is the leader in the home (although the husband is admonished to be the spiritual "head"). It Scripture implies that leadership is shared and decision making is based on sacrificial love and respect. Ephesians 5 does not address personality differences and how those work between

married couples in regard to leadership. Sometimes the female is more outgoing and assertive than her husband. The teaching here is focused more on the attitude a husband and wife are to show to one another - one of sacrificial love, submission and respect.

### ***Proper Expressions of Human Sexuality***

The Bible has much to say about human sexuality and the proper boundaries for sexual expression. An entire paper could be written on this subject alone. One only needs to do a computer word search and find that there are approximately 47 references to the word "sexual" in the New International Version of the Bible. These refer primarily to improper sexual relations or sexual immorality. In addition, there are approximately 47 references to adultery which refers to breaking one's marriage covenant by engaging in a sexual relationship outside of the marriage. When the Bible addresses sexual relations it is explicit about improper relationships. Forbidden relationships include homosexual unions, incestuous relationships with a family member, and sexual relations with animals. God is not attempting to keep humankind from experiencing something pleasurable, but these behaviors are unnatural and are detrimental to

healthy family functioning and human interaction. These behaviors are a perversion of God's original plan.

As the culture continues to widen and blur the boundaries for sexual expression, therapists will see more people who have experienced the heartbreak associated with sexual activity that has violated God's boundaries. The good news is that God is able to forgive sin, cleanse guilt, and restore people to a proper relationship with himself and with one another. As people are obedient to God's commands, they will experience a more satisfying sexual union. According to Balswick and Balswick (1999a, p. 150), a survey was given to couples in monogamous marriages and it revealed that they not only had sex more often but enjoyed it more than any other group in their study. Nearly forty percent of the married couples had sex twice a week and the great majority enjoyed orgasm as part of their lovemaking experience. Marital commitment proved to be extremely important to these couples and the vast majority had been faithful to their partners.

Olson and Olson (2000, p. 4) show in their research of over 21,501 married couples that married couples are more satisfied sexually than cohabitating couples. They write, "Over half, 54% of married males and 43% of

married females are extremely satisfied with their sexual relationship. For cohabiting couples, about 44% of the males and 35% of females are extremely satisfied." When couples share the commitment of marriage, they are generally more satisfied in their sexual relationship because they feel more secure, respected, honored, loved and the commitment gives them a deeper sense of intimacy.

A defining chapter in the Bible that addresses married and unmarried relationships is 1 Corinthians 7:1-17. The Apostle Paul discusses various aspects of sexual expression and levels of commitment to Christ and to marriage. He speaks to a variety of issues such as marriage between an unbeliever and a believer, separation between married couples, whether to remain single or to marry, the treatment of virgins, how engaged couples should act toward one another, and remarriage after a spouse dies. He also addresses the subject of sex within the confines of a marriage relationship. 1 Corinthians 7:2-6 (NIV) reads:

2 But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

4 The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.



5 Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.

Balswick and Balswick (1999a, p. 154) comment on this Scripture. They suggest that the word which is translated "mutual consent" is derived from a Greek word, "symphonia", which is the same root word from which we get our word "symphony". This implies that the married couple is acting in unity and harmony in their decision to abstain from sexual intercourse for a season - they are in agreement. As the Scripture indicates, it is for spiritual reasons that they choose to abstain from sexual relations for a short time.

### ***Conclusion***

The Scriptures that have been discussed are monumental for understanding the origin of marriage and family relationships, its uniqueness, the effects of sin, the curse upon that relationship, and the need for spiritual redemption and rebirth. In addition, the attitudes and actions a husband and wife are to show one another were cited. A good analogy to the marriage relationship is the relationship of that which Christ has with the church - one of sacrifice. Next, the boundaries

for proper sexual expression were discussed with the implication within a marriage. Finally, the major issue that is facing the church in our culture - divorce and remarriage - was discussed. This theological worldview provides the foundation as various psychological theories are integrated to form an approach to therapy in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter 2**

### **A Review of the Literature**

This chapter will review the literature that is pertinent to the thesis of this paper - there is hope for people to overcome their family of origin deficiencies that negatively affect their marriage and family life. In order to support this thesis we will look at four psychological theories that contribute to this writer's integrated approach to therapy. They include Family Systems Theory, Structural Family Therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy. These will be reviewed in the discussion that follows. In Chapter 3 they will be integrated with Scripture in order to produce a counseling model that is Biblically informed.

#### ***Family Systems Theory***

Family Systems Theory has made a major contribution to this writer's understanding of the interrelationship of behaviors within a family constellation. One of the basic premises of Family Systems Theory according to Balswick and Balswick (1999b, p. 37) is that "family life is not merely the sum total of the actions of all the individual members, but rather involves the interactions of all family members operating as a unit of interrelated

parts.” Therefore, Family Systems Theory considers behaviors within the context of the relationships in which they occur. If a therapist can help a client change behavior, a ripple effect is often introduced within the family system which requires other family members to alter their behavior. They alter their behavior because the new behavior causes disequilibrium within the family system. The family will seek to establish a new state of homeostasis or go back to the way things were. Hopefully lasting change will occur and bring about the new way of thinking, behaving and interacting. In the discussion that follows we will review two key concepts within the family systems framework - differentiation of self and relationship triangles. We will also note how these relate to one another.

### ***Differentiation***

Murray Bowen and his associates are the primary pioneers in the field of Family Systems Theory. According to Corsini and Wedding (1989), many of Bowen's theories were developed in the 1950's and grew out of his work with schizophrenics and their families. One of his primary contributions is the concept of differentiation. Kerr and Bowen (1988) theorize that every human being enters the world totally dependent on others for their

well-being. Usually the significant influencer in an infant's life is the infant's mother who is the child's primary care giver. The infant begins life in a state of complete emotional fusion with the mother. As the child develops and matures, his capacity to be responsible for himself gradually increases. As the years pass, the growing child is confronted with the developmental task of becoming an individual - an adult. The parents are presented with the task of functioning in ways that permit the child's individuality to emerge. According to Bowen, seeking to differentiate from one's family of origin is an instinctually rooted life force. The life force propels every human being to become a separate individual with the ability to think, feel, and act for himself. In contrast, there is another instinctually rooted life force (togetherness) at work at the same time that propels child and family to remain emotionally connected and to operate in reaction to one another. The togetherness force drives child and family to think, feel, and act as one. The result of these counterbalancing life forces is that no one achieves complete emotional separation from his family.

Kerr and Bowen (1988) argue that in a well differentiated family the low intensity of emotionality

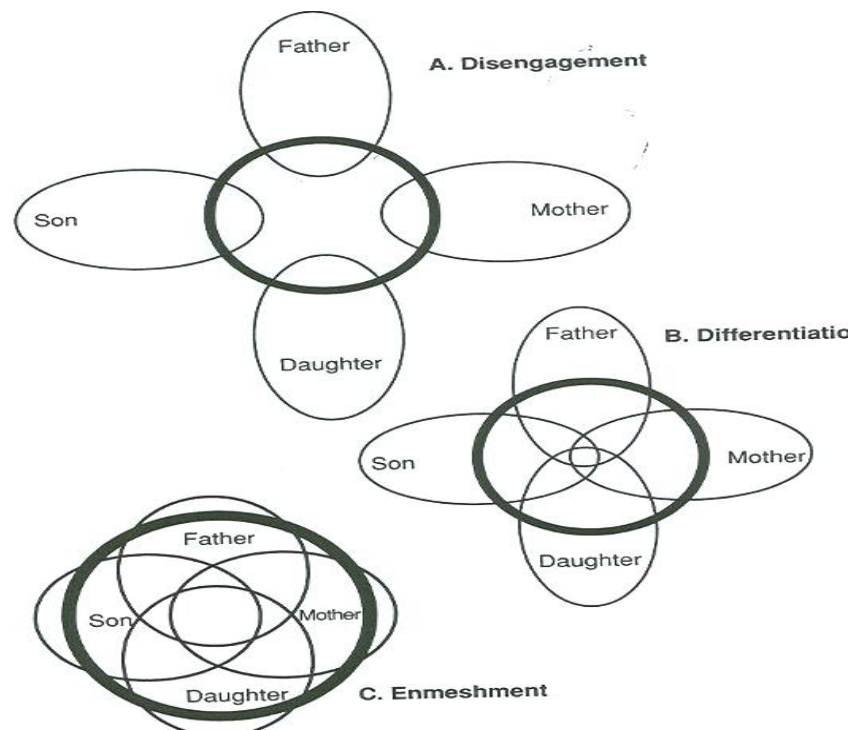
or togetherness pressure permits a child to grow to think, feel, and act for himself. His self-image is not formed in reaction to the anxieties and emotional neediness of others; nor do others define the child through their own emotionally distorted perceptions. The child grows into adulthood to be a part of the family, yet separate from it with his own independent thoughts, beliefs, and values. In contrast, in a poorly differentiated family the emotionality and subjectivity of parents and other family members have a strong influence on all family relationships. The high intensity of togetherness pressure does not permit a child to grow to think, feel, and act for himself. The thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and values of the individual family members are *enmeshed* or *fused*. This enmeshment or fusion is what causes dysfunction in the way the members of a family interact not only amongst themselves but also with others outside the immediate family.

Edwin Friedman also has produced some major work in the field of Family System's Theory. He was an ordained rabbi and family therapist. His primary work was with families in the synagogue and in private practice. Friedman (1985, p. 27) sheds light on the importance of differentiation. He describes it as "the capacity of a

family member to define his or her own life's goals and values apart from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say "I" when others are demanding "you" and "we". It includes the capacity to maintain a (relatively) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional wellbeing. It can be measured somewhat by the breadth of one's repertoire of responses when confronted with crises." Friedman clarifies that differentiation should not be confused with autonomy or narcissism. Differentiation is the capacity to be an "I" while remaining connected to others.

As mentioned above by Bowen, emotional fusion and enmeshment can keep family members from differentiating from one another. Balswick and Balswick (1999b, p. 47) give further clarity to the concepts of fusion and enmeshment. They write that when family members are enmeshed, "they lack a sense of separate identity or individuality, each being overly dependent upon the family for identity. An example of enmeshment is a whole family's being devastated by one member's problem. All the members become overly involved and make the problem, their own. They lose perspective. In the process the problem worsens, and the chance of finding a solution

lessens.” Some helpful diagrams are offered by the Balswick’s to contrast the concepts of differentiation, disengagement and enmeshment. See figure 1 below:



Balswick & Balswick, 1999b, p. 48

The bold lines and the light lines around the family indicate the boundaries around each individual family member. In the disengaged family (A) the lives of the individual members very rarely touch each other. Cohesion is so low that each person lives in psychological isolation from the others. In the differentiated family (B) daily lives overlap, but each individual is also involved in activities outside the family. Each member has a separate life and identity and



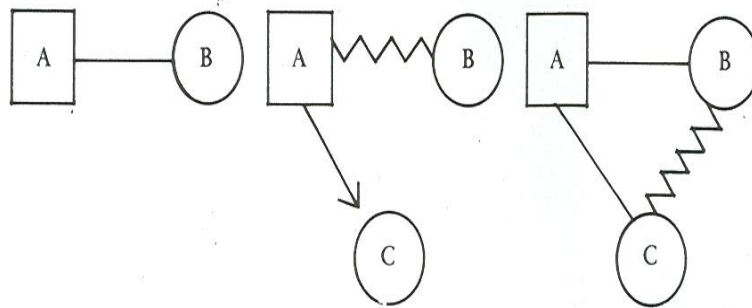
is therefore actively and meaningfully engaged with others. Although a vital part of each member's identity and support is found within the family, much is found beyond the family boundary as well. In the enmeshed family (C) the lives of all are entwined with each other. Each family member has little identity beyond the boundary of the family. Even within the family there is little space for a given member to be independent of the others. A member of an enmeshed family who tries to separate is likely to be labeled disloyal and to experience pressure from the others to remain enmeshed.

### ***Emotional Triangles***

A second major contribution that Bowen and his associates made to Family Systems Theory was the identification and study of emotional *triangles*. Kerr and Bowen (1988, p. 135) write,

A triangle describes the dynamic equilibrium of a three-person system. The major influence on the activity of a triangle is anxiety. When it is low, a relationship between two people can be calm and comfortable, however, since a relationship is easily disturbed by emotional forces within it and from outside, it usually does not remain completely comfortable very long. Inevitably, there is some increase in anxiety that disturbs the relationship equilibrium ... when anxiety increases, a third person becomes involved in the tension of the twosome, creating a triangle. This involvement of a third person decreases anxiety in the twosome by spreading it through three relationships.

A diagram and explanation of an emotional triangle is provided by Kerr and Bowen. See figure 2 below:



Kerr and Bowen 1988, p. 136-137

The left diagram indicates a calm relationship; neither person is sufficiently uncomfortable to triangle a third person. The center diagram shows conflict in the relationship and the more uncomfortable person (A) triangling a third person (C). The result of the triangling (shown on the right) is the conflict has shifted out of the original twosome and into the relationship between B and C. The tension is decreased between A and B.

Friedman (1985, p. 35-36) provides further clarity to the concept of relationship triangles. He writes,

The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will 'triangle in' or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another. A person may be said to be 'triangled' if he or she gets caught in the middle as the focus of such an unresolved issue. Typical emotional triangles found

in families are mother-father-child; a parent and any two children; a parent, his or her child, and his or her own parents; a parent, a child, and a symptom in the child (doing badly in school, drugs, stealing, sexual acting out, allergies); one spouse, the other, and the other's dysfunction (drinking, gambling, an affair, depression).

Triangling and differentiation are interrelated phenomenon in relationships. According to Kerr and Bowen (1988, p. 139), the intensity of the triangling process varies among families and in the same family over time because triangles are a product of non-differentiation in the human process. The lower the level of differentiation in a family, the more important the role of triangling is for preserving emotional stability. If anxiety is very low, even in a poorly differentiated family it is possible for the three members of a triangle to function as emotionally separate individuals. In a poorly differentiated system however, the stress on it must be very low for this to occur. Stress triggers anxiety. As it intensifies the triangles become more active. In an extremely well differentiated system, people can maintain their emotional separateness even when highly stressed. If people can maintain their emotional autonomy, triangling is minimal, and the system's stability does not depend on it.

### ***Structural Family Therapy***

According to Corsini and Wedding (1989), whereas Murray Bowen focused his study primarily upon triangles and multi-generational analysis, Salvador Minuchin has studied parent-child relationships and the boundaries that separate them. The basic assumption of Structural Family Therapy, according to Brown and Christensen (1986), is that the family is not a collection of individuals or the sum total of individual personalities but is an entity or organism. The "patient" is the family, and the presenting problem or symptom is seen as a function of the health of the whole family organism. Although the family may identify one family member as the patient (the identified patient) the structuralist will view that individual as merely the symptom bearer. Friedman (1985, p. 19) brings clarity to the idea of "identified patient." He says that the identified patient is seen as the family "sick one" but in reality he is the one who carries the family stress or pathology. In a child this could take the form of excessive bedwetting, hyperactivity, school failures, drugs, obesity, or juvenile diabetes; in a spouse its form could be excessive drinking, depression, chronic ailments, a heart condition or perhaps even cancer; in an aged member

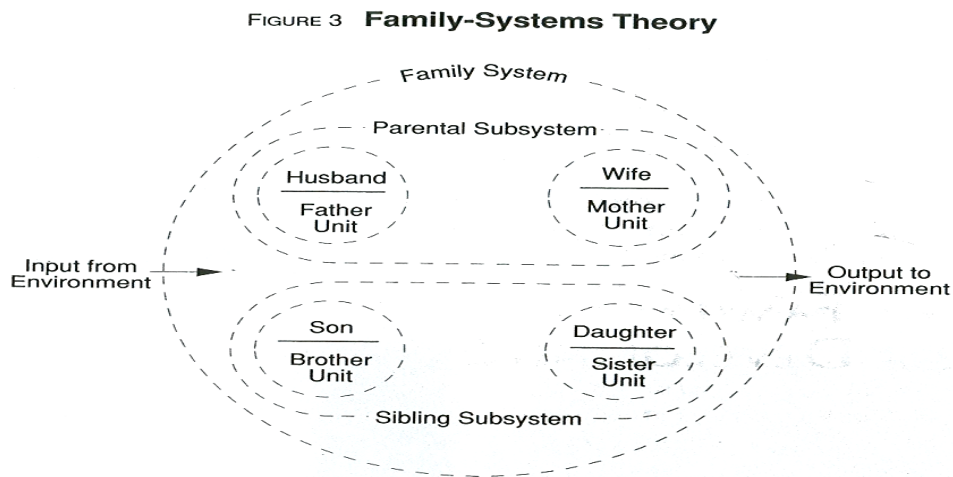
of the family it could show up as confusion, senility, or agitated or random behavior. In a church congregation it could surface as the drinking, burnout, or sexual acting out of the "family leader". Although it may appear that the "identified patient" is the problem, the structural therapist assumes that the symptom is being maintained by interactional and structural problems within the family system as a whole. Therefore, Structural Family Therapy focuses on the social organization of a family.

### ***Family Subsystems***

In Structural Family Therapy, there are three key subsystems within the total family organism (Brown & Christensen, 1986). First, there is the *marital subsystem*. It is the first to form and is central to the functioning of the family. The marital subsystem's basic role is to provide mutual satisfaction for the couple's needs without compromising the emotional environment necessary for further growth and development of two maturing and changing individuals. The second subsystem is called the *parental subsystem*. It includes those behavioral transactional patterns that are necessary in relation to raising children. The parental subsystem may consist of a father-mother team or may consist of one parent together with significant others who participate to

varying degrees in the raising of the children. The remaining subsystem is the *sibling subsystem* which is made up of the children within the family. Learning how to relate to peers, other siblings, and to authority is the primary function of the sibling subsystem.

Figure 3 below illustrates the family subsystems with the invisible boundaries that govern how interaction takes place.



Balswick and Balswick, 1999b, p. 38

### **Boundaries**

*Boundaries* are the rules that define how family members interact with one another. According to Brown and Christensen (1986), the family's boundaries vary in their degree of *flexibility* and *permeability*. Some family's boundaries may be too rigid (inflexible) and therefore make it difficult for the family members to

adjust to new situations. Permeability on the other hand refers to the amount of access family members have across boundary lines. When boundaries are too permeable they are ill defined and allow too much access (or interference) by other family members or society. Other families may have boundaries around their system or their subsystems that are impermeable or closed, limiting needed access to each other or the world outside the family. Examples of flexible or permeable boundaries are cited by Brown and Christensen (1986, p. 56):

If a husband and wife allow a child to interfere with their marital disagreement, then the boundaries are too permeable and fail to protect the couple's subsystem. When boundaries are too permeable, family members are enmeshed in the family system at the cost of their own autonomy and personal mastery (that is, family members don't learn to work out their own problems). At the other end of this theoretical axis are families who have impermeable or rigid boundaries. Members of these families have only minimal contact with one another. The families appear to be collections of individuals who are very autonomous. However, they maintain their separateness at the expense of mutual support.

As cited in Chapter 2, a therapist who contributed landmark studies in the arena of family systems and particularly, Structural Family Therapy is Salvador Minuchin (1974). He found that there are two extreme styles of interaction that can occur with the functioning of boundaries. He identifies them as *enmeshment* and

*disengagement*. They can also be labeled as *diffused* or *overly rigid* boundaries respectively. Members of enmeshed subsystems or families may be handicapped in that the heightened sense of belonging requires a major yielding of autonomy. The lack of subsystem differentiation discourages autonomous exploration and mastery of problems. Members of disengaged family subsystems may function autonomously but have a skewed sense of independence. They often lack feelings of loyalty and a sense of belonging. They lack the capacity for interdependence or the motivation to request support when needed. In other words, a system toward the extreme disengaged end of the continuum tolerates a wide range of individual variations in its members. But stresses on one family member do not cross over its inappropriately rigid boundaries. Only a high level of individual stress can echo strongly enough to activate the family's supportive systems.

At the enmeshed end of the continuum, the opposite is true. The behavior of one member immediately affects others, so stress in an individual member reverberates strongly across the boundaries and is swiftly felt in other subsystems. Both types of relating - disengaged and enmeshed - cause family problems when adaptive



mechanisms are evoked. The enmeshed family responds to any variation with excessive speed and intensity. The disengaged family tends not to respond when a response is necessary. For example, the parents in an enmeshed family may become tremendously upset because a child does not eat his desert. The parents in a disengaged family may feel unconcerned about a child's truancy from school.

### ***The Circumplex Model***

Dr. David Olson has graphed the concept of boundaries and family interaction patterns in what is called the Circumplex Model of Family Functioning (Olson & Olson, 2000, p. 141). On *The Couple and Family Map* the husband and wife can graph their levels of closeness and flexibility and also that of their family of origin. This provides a generational comparison and enables a couple to see the linkage between their couple relationship and their family of origin, which otherwise may not be so obvious. In Olson's model *overly flexible* is the same as Minuchin's concept of *diffused*. *Inflexible* is similar to Minuchin's concept of *overly rigid*. In turn, *disconnected* is the same as Minuchin's *disengaged* pattern; *overly connected* is like Minuchin's *enmeshed* pattern. Olson's *Couple and Family Map* is portrayed as figure 4 below:



## Couple & Family Map

		C L O S E N E S S					INDICATORS OF FLEXIBILITY
		DISCONNECTED	SOMEWHAT CONNECTED	CONNECTED	VERY CONNECTED	OVERLY CONNECTED	
F L E X I B I L I T Y	OVERLY FLEXIBLE						<b>UNBALANCED OVERLY FLEXIBLE</b> • Ability to change • Leadership • Role sharing • Discipline • Too much change • Lack of leadership • Dramatic role shifts • Erratic discipline
	VERY FLEXIBLE						
	FLEXIBLE						<b>BALANCED SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE TO VERY FLEXIBLE</b> • Can change when necessary • Shared leadership • Role sharing • Democratic discipline
	SOMEWHAT FLEXIBLE						
	INFLEXIBLE						<b>UNBALANCED INFLEXIBLE</b> • Too little change • Authoritarian leadership • Roles seldom change • Strict discipline
INDICATORS OF CLOSENESS		UNBALANCED Disconnected	BALANCED Somewhat Connected to Very Connected		UNBALANCED Overly Connected		
Separateness (I) vs. Togetherness (We)		Too Much (I) Separateness	Good I-We Balance		Too Much (We) Togetherness		
Closeness		Little Closeness	Moderate to High Closeness		Too Much Closeness		
Loyalty		Lack of Loyalty	Moderate to High Loyalty		Loyalty Demanded		
Independence		High Independence	Interdependent		High Dependency		

	BALANCED
	MID-RANGE
	UNBALANCED

Olson, 2001, p. 18

In reference to the Couple and Family Map, *closeness* refers to how emotionally connected a person feels to another person. It involves a balance between separateness and togetherness – one's private space and one's intimate connection. Olson suggests that there are

five levels of closeness in a relationship, from *disconnected* at the lowest level, to *connected* in the middle, to *overly connected* in the high end. Finding the right balance between separateness and togetherness is the key to healthy couple and family life.

*Flexibility* refers to how open to change couples or families are in their relationships. It describes the amount of change that occurs, for example, in leadership, role relationships, and relationship rules. Here too, there are five levels of flexibility: from *inflexible* on the low end, to *flexible* in the middle, to *overly flexible* on the high end. This measurement assesses how the couple or family system balances change. Balance, once again, is the key to a healthy relationship. Some families do not handle change well. The stress from change can cause them to become angry with one another or more rigid with the enforcement of rules. There may be a breakdown in leadership with no one able to provide structure for the family in the midst of the crises. They might experience depression or other negative emotions as a result (Olson & Olson, 2000).

### ***Alignment and Power***

In addition to boundaries, a structural therapist will assess the way a family is aligned and the

distribution of power within the family unit (Brown & Christensen, 1986). *Alignment* refers to the way a family joins force to accomplish a task or support one another. Alignment becomes dysfunctional when different members of the family form *coalitions* against other members of the family. For example, a father and daughter form a coalition against the mother. Triangulation is part of coalition building in a negative sense. Family members need to learn to interact with one another on an individual basis when solving conflict.

*Power* in a family system always refers to the relative ability of an individual or a subsystem to carry out its functions. When there are improper alignments, often there will be a misuse of power or an inability to exercise appropriate power. For example, when there is an inappropriate alliance between a parent and a child, it will diminish the parent's power as an executive with the other children in the family. A coalition between a mother and daughter against the father reduces the power of the parents to control their daughter. In addition, when parents do not give their children power to accomplish tasks that are appropriate to their developmental stage, they can become frustrated, rebellious, or inept when making decisions. On the other

hand, granting them inappropriate power for their developmental stage can cause them to lack appropriate control, act inappropriately in social situations, or they can make careless decisions resulting in bodily injury.

### ***Cognitive Behavior Therapy***

Another approach to therapy that this writer finds helpful is Cognitive Behavior Therapy. Butman and Jones (1991) indicate that there are many variations of the Cognitive-Behavioral model. They insist that this theory does not have one founding theorist to give it cohesion, however, there are some primary representatives. Three of the most influential pioneers in this field are Albert Bandura, D. Meichenbaum, and Aaron T. Beck. For this thesis, we will only focus upon the contributions provided by Beck. The basic tenant of Cognitive Therapy is that the way a person thinks about an event affects their feelings and this will influence their behavior. Beck (1976, p. 19-20) placed this simple principle within the context of emotional disorders:

Psychological problems are not necessarily the product of mysterious, impenetrable forces but may result from commonplace processes such as faulty learning, making incorrect inferences on the basis of inadequate or incorrect information, and not distinguishing adequately between imagination and reality. Moreover, thinking can be unrealistic

because it is derived from erroneous premises; behavior can be self-defeating because it is based on unreasonable attitudes. Thus, psychological problems can be mastered by sharpening discriminations, correcting misconceptions, and learning more adaptive attitudes.

Beck (1976) arrived at this conclusion while observing patients as they practiced free association during psychotherapy. In time he suspected that they were not reporting certain kinds of ideation. When he requested that they share their undisclosed cognitions, they commonly revealed two trains of thought: one of hostility and criticism toward him (which they expressed in free association); and others that were of a self-critical nature. Thoughts like, "I said the wrong thing to the therapist ... I shouldn't have said ... I am wrong to criticize the therapist ... I am bad." Beck realized that these thoughts were linked to the patient's feelings. Beck tested this discovery with other patients during free association exercises and they too shared streams of thoughts that they had left unreported.

In order to probe into their unexpressed thoughts, Beck had to guide the patients to be attentive to certain ideas and to report them to him. He instructed the patients, "Whenever you experience an unpleasant feeling or sensation, try to recall what thoughts you had been

having prior to the feeling." Eventually they could identify these thoughts. They seemed to emerge automatically and rapidly so he labeled them, *automatic thoughts*. This provided the raw material for understanding the emotional states and disturbances.

In addition, Beck found that people speak to themselves one way and to others a different way, but the patient rarely pays attention to what he is telling himself. He ceaselessly interprets or misinterprets events, monitors his own behavior, makes predictions, and draws generalizations about himself, however, he does not report these thoughts because of shame or anxiety. The patient tended to regard these thoughts as plausible or reasonable, although they may have seemed far-fetched to somebody else. The patient accepted their validity without question and without testing out their reality or logic. These negative thoughts occurred despite the fact that they were contrary to objective evidence. Beck noted that the content of automatic thoughts, particularly those that were repetitive and seemed to be most powerful, were idiosyncratic. They tended to be peculiar not only to the individual patient but to other patients with the same diagnosis. Beck (1976, p. 38) concluded, "The way a person monitors and instructs

himself, praises and criticizes himself, interprets events, and makes predictions not only illuminates normal behavior, but sheds light on the inner workings of emotional disorders."

A second contribution Beck made to the field of Cognitive Therapy was with his understanding of emotional reactions to events. He believed that one must make a distinction between the "public" meaning of an occurrence and the "personal" or "private" meaning. The public meaning is the formal, objective definition of the event devoid of personal significance or connotation. Beck (1976, p. 48) shares the following example to illustrate this observation:

A boy is teased by his friends: The objective meaning of the event is simply that they are goading him. The personal meaning for the boy who is teased is more complex, for example, 'They don't like me' or 'I am a weakling.' Although he is aware of this special meaning, he generally keeps it to himself because he knows that if he admits his private reactions openly, his friends will probably tease him even more. A girl who receives the best grade in her class may think, 'This shows I am better than the other students,' but she is not likely to express this special meaning lest she antagonize her classmates. Special meanings are evoked when an event touches on an important part of a person's life, such as acceptance by peers, but they frequently remain private and unexpressed.

Private meanings are often inaccurate because the person does not have the opportunity to check their



authenticity. A person's reactions to an event can be completely inappropriate or so excessive as to seem abnormal. His misinterpretation of an event can lead to a web of incorrect meanings that he has attached to the situation - interpretations that depart from reality and are therefore considered deviant. The deviant meanings constitute the *cognitive distortions* that form the core of emotional disorders. (For this research we will look more closely at *Cognitive Distortions* in Chapter 3 as we integrate Cognitive Therapy with a Biblical approach to therapy).

When working with a client who is disturbed by an event, it is critical that the therapist identify the meaning the client attaches to the event, and then helps the client discern if the meaning they have attached to the event is accurate or distorted. If it is distorted then the therapist must help the client combat these "cognitive distortions" with truth and accurate statements.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy has been effective with anxiety and panic disorders, depression, post traumatic stress disorder, anger management, suicidal ideation, paranoia disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and a host of other emotional problems. Not only is this form

of therapy useful with individuals, but it can be applied in marriage and family settings as the therapist teaches them to analyze their perceptions or misperceptions which are contributing to emotional distress or maladaptive behavior patterns(Beck, 1976) .

A therapist should keep Beck's theory in mind when working with distressed clients. He should probe beyond the thoughts that are reported and help the client identify and analyze automatic thoughts or self-talk. The therapist should also attempt to discover the meaning that the client attaches to the events they encounter. Is the meaning accurate or distorted when tested with reality? Does the meaning cause the patient emotional distress or result in abnormal behavior? Do their beliefs keep them from reaching their potential or goals?

### ***Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy***

Closely related to Cognitive Behavior Therapy is Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) which was championed by Albert Ellis. One of the basic tenants of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy is that people are disturbed not by things (events, circumstances, other people's behavior), but by the views which they take of them. Ellis and MacLaren (1998) postulate that it is not the event that causes emotional problems or maladaptive

behavior, but rather it is the attitudes and beliefs about an event that cause emotional reactions. Ellis and MacLaren (1998, p. 27) describe this process - the ABCs of REBT - as follows:

People are easily distressed when they have goals and purposes (G) to stay alive and be happy and free from pain and when Adversity (A) interferes and they do not get what they want, or do get what they don't want. They have a choice of reacting to A with healthy negative feelings, such as sorrow, regret, and frustration, or reacting with unhealthy negative feelings, such as panic, depression, and rage. Largely, though not completely, they make this choice at B, their Belief System. When they choose rational or self-helping Beliefs, according to REBT, they often react with healthy feelings and actions; when they choose irrational or unhealthy Beliefs, they are more likely to react with unhealthy ones.

In REBT theory it is important for the therapist to help the client distinguish between "rational" and "irrational" thoughts. Rational thoughts do not mean the absence of emotion, but to self-helping thoughts; "irrational" refers to self-defeating thoughts. There are many underlying beliefs that could be considered irrational. Some core irrational beliefs that REBT identifies are:

1. Absolutistic musts and shoulds - e.g., "I must not be falsely accused."
2. "Awfulizing" - e.g., it is awful and horrible to be falsely accused.

3. "I-can't-stand-it-itis" - e.g., "I can't stand being falsely accused." When people say "I can't stand it" they usually mean that the things they don't like are so bad that they should not exist. This is called low frustration tolerance or discomfort disturbance.
4. Damning oneself and others - e.g. "I am a rotten person if I am falsely accused and people think I really did steal." "My accusers are bad people for falsely accusing me."

The process for disputing irrational thoughts is like an equation, Ellis and MacLaren (1998, p.41): (A) the person has an Activating experience. This is an event or person that creates distress in their life. (B) The person has *Irrational* Beliefs about the experience. (C) The person experiences an *Upsetting Emotional* Consequence from their Beliefs, e.g., depression, hostility, fear. (D) The person is taught to Dispute their irrational ideas. Lastly, they experience an (E) *New* Emotional Consequence or Effect, e.g., peace of mind or acceptance. This approach can be used in marriage and family counseling as well as individual counseling. Similar to Cognitive Behavior Therapy, the patient can be taught to address thought patterns and beliefs that are

contributing to emotional distress or maladaptive behavior.

### ***Conclusion***

We have reviewed four theoretical perspectives that can be applied to individual or marriage and family therapy. As stated above, Family Systems Theory identifies how behaviors within a family system are interrelated. By analyzing the family constellation, assessing differentiation among family members, and identifying emotional triangles, the therapist can find leverage points which may be used to bring about healthy adjustment within the family system. Structural Family Therapy is closely related to Family Systems Therapy but adds the dimensions of the analysis of boundaries within the family subsystems, proper alignment of subsystems, and the use of power within the family unit. Cognitive Behavior Therapy and REBT contribute the assumption that our beliefs about reality have a direct affect upon our feelings and behavior. As the therapist and client dialogue about the client's beliefs concerning a distressing situation, they can identify underlying beliefs or assumptions that are irrational, and then the therapist can help the client restructure thinking which provides them with more adaptive feelings or ways of

interaction. All four of these theories can be integrated within a Biblical framework which will be demonstrated in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter 3**

### **An Integrative Approach to Therapy**

The writer of this thesis is a Christian therapist who interprets world events, the natural environment, scientific discoveries, supernatural phenomena, catastrophes, human interaction, and life in general through a Biblical worldview. A basic assumption is that all truth is inspired by God, whether "secular" or "sacred" because God created all knowledge; one of God's attributes is truth; Jesus declared himself to be "the way, the truth and the life"; and the Holy Spirit is called the "Spirit of Truth." However, it is also assumed that not all truth is contained in the Bible. For example, the Bible does not claim to be a science manual or a book on mathematics, but Scripture contains salvation history and insight into man's human nature, motivations, and psyche. The task of the Christian therapist is to take secular psychological principles and theories, knowledge from all fields of learning, scientific discovery, etc. - accept what conforms to Scripture or does not contradict Scripture, expose deception or humanistic philosophy, and integrate truth with Scripture to form an approach that can be used for

God's glory and human healing. The thesis writer agrees with Dr. Gary Collins:

Christians in psychology are able to go further than their secular colleagues. Through the influence and inner witness of the Holy Spirit, we have "inside information" about the universe, the origin and ultimate future of human life, and our purposes for living. Such understanding grows and our explanations become clearer when we grasp the truths of the Bible. Despite its wealth of information about human beings, their universe, and their God, the Bible is not intended to be a psychology text book. But it supplies crucial background assumptions by which we can shape and judge psychological theories and conclusions (Van Leeuwen, 1996). For example, Scripture alerts us to the place of sin in shaping human behavior, the role of God in bringing healing, the reasons for temptations that can disrupt our lives, and the principles for living in harmony with others (Johnson & Jones, 2000, p. 110).

The discussion that follows will address how Family Systems Theory, Structural Family Therapy, Cognitive Behavior Therapy, and Rational Emotive-Behavior Therapy can be integrated with a Biblical worldview to form an effective therapeutic approach to counseling. The integrated approach supports the thesis that there is hope for people to overcome the deficiencies from their respective families of origin.



## ***Family Systems Therapy***

### ***Differentiation***

A key concept in Family Systems Theory mentioned in Chapter 2 is differentiation of self. One of the primary dynamics for a therapist to observe when working with individuals or couples is their level of differentiation because it is an indicator of emotional, psychological, and spiritual maturity. Friedman (1985, p. 27) defined differentiation as "the capacity of a family member to define his or her own life's goals and values apart from the surrounding togetherness pressures, to say "I" when others are demanding "you" and "we". It includes the capacity to maintain a (relative) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being." Friedman clarified that differentiation should not be confused with autonomy or narcissism. Differentiation is the capacity to be an "I" while remaining connected to others.

Not only is differentiation a secular psychological concept, it is a Biblical concept as well. A husband and wife must possess this quality in order to interact in a healthy manner. They must be able to help their children *individuate* as they pass through the developmental stages

so they can leave their family of origin when they become adults. After God created Eve, Adam acknowledged that she was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh." Physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally Eve was similar to him. Genesis 2:24 says, "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (NIV). God requires children to grow to maturity - differentiate from parents - then leave home and be united to a spouse to form a new distinct union. The "one flesh" relationship is not an enmeshed union, but refers to two distinct individuals that are both an "I" and a "we" at the same time. They join themselves sexually to form "one flesh" as manifested in the birth of a child.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, God held each personally responsible for disobeying His law and judged them accordingly. He also held them accountable as a couple. After sinning, Adam and Eve's undifferentiated selves began to emerge. Immediately they blamed others for their misdeeds. Undifferentiated people commonly refuse to take responsibility for their own actions. They project their negative emotions on to others. They triangle a third person/object into their conflict. Often the presence of anger, blame, manipulation, or a

controlling disposition, reflects the undifferentiated self. The poorly differentiated self seems to be a byproduct of man's fallen nature or wounded soul. Seeking to help individuals or couples develop differentiation is an important task for the therapist to pursue.

In support of the Biblical concept of "leaving" and "cleaving", the Balswicks suggest that the appropriate time for individuals to marry is after they have differentiated from their family of origin and have developed healthy self-esteem (Balswick & Balswick, 1999b, p. 75). They argue that there are two types of undifferentiated individuals: those who are enmeshed in their family of origin and those who are disengaged from it. Enmeshed people are so tightly wound up with their family that there is no healthy separateness. Disengaged persons are so distanced from their family that there is no healthy connectedness.

When it comes to premarital and post-marital counseling it is important for the therapist to be attentive to the level of differentiation within the couple's relationship. Some helpful questions to consider might be: Do family members take responsibility for their own emotions or do they project their feelings

onto one another? Are there clear and appropriate boundaries set between the family subsystems? Are family members encouraged to think independently and share their own opinions on important issues? Are family members delegated responsibilities appropriate to their age or developmental stage? Are family members encouraged to nurture interests and friendships outside the immediate family? Do they enjoy being together? Are they able to work together to accomplish projects and goals? Are they able to share appropriate affection with one another? Do they support one another? How do they express anger and solve conflict? How much influence does their family of origin have upon them after they leave home?

### ***Emotional Triangles***

A second theoretical concept in Family Systems Theory that is useful when assessing and evaluating marital and family health is the presence of emotional triangles. When discussing triangles, Friedman (1985, p. 35-36) writes:

The basic law of emotional triangles is that when any two parts of a system become uncomfortable with one another, they will 'triangle in' or focus upon a third person, or issue, as a way of stabilizing their own relationship with one another. A person may be said to be 'triangled' if he or she gets caught in the middle as the focus of such an unresolved issue." He continues, "Typical emotional triangles found in families are mother-father-child;

a parent and any two children; a parent, his or her child, and his or her own parents; a parent, a child, and a symptom in the child (doing badly in school, drugs, stealing, sexual acting out, allergies); one spouse, the other, and the other's dysfunction (drinking, gambling, an affair, depression).

How can a therapist help the members of a family, church, or workplace identify and resolve unhealthy triangles? First, the therapist needs to help the family members differentiate from each other. When members of a family are poorly differentiated, triangling is more likely to occur when under stress. Therefore, family members must be encouraged to take responsibility for their own emotions, feelings, thoughts, and beliefs. They must avoid forming coalitions against one another. From a Biblical perspective, they need to take responsibility for their own behaviors, sins, and for the negative feelings they might harbor against one another. Often when people have been hurt by someone they will triangle in a third party for support or if they want more power they will form a coalition with another person who shares their same feelings. A Biblical principle that can be applied to triangles is Matthew 18:15-17 (NIV) which says,

15 "If your brother sins against you, go and show Him his fault, just between the two of you. If he

listens to you, you have won your brother over.

16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'

17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Obviously when an offense has been committed, reconciliation must begin between the two people who are involved in the conflict. The implication from this Scripture is that a third party is never triangled in unless the offending party refuses to repent of their sinful behavior or make restitution to the victim. The implication is that one party is guilty of abuse, unhealthy behavior, or refuses to change. So the victim's only alternative is to get a third party involved. Often in relationships people are dishonest when offended. They will talk to others about their hurts before they go to the offender to seek reconciliation.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, triangling can reveal inappropriate boundaries or alignments between parent and child subsystems. It can show that a member of the family is over-functioning and others are under-functioning. The presence of triangles can reveal that

sexual, physical, or emotional abuse has occurred. It might indicate some form of substance dependency by a family member. When triangles exist throughout a family genogram it may reveal generational patterns of maladaptive behavior, cut-offs, unforgiveness, substance abuse, or sexual improprieties. The maladaptive patterns should be identified, analyzed, and addressed with appropriate behaviors.

### ***Structural Family Therapy***

Another theoretical approach to therapy that is closely related to Family Systems Theory is Structural Family Therapy. Salvador Minuchin developed this approach through his research and practice with underprivileged families. According to Minuchin (1974), when assessing a family's interactions, the therapist concentrates on six major areas. First, he considers the family structure, its preferred transactional patterns and the alternatives available. Second, he evaluates the system's flexibility and its capacity for elaboration and restructuring, as revealed by the reshuffling of the system's alliances, coalitions, and subsystems in response to changing circumstances. Third, the therapist examines the family system's resonance, its sensitivity to individual members' actions. Families fall somewhere

on the range between enmeshment - such extreme sensitivity to individual members' inputs that the threshold for the activation of counter deviation mechanisms is inappropriately low, and disengagement - such extremely low sensitivity to individual members' inputs that the threshold for the activation of counter deviation mechanisms is inappropriately high. Fourth, the therapist reviews the family life context, analyzing the sources of support. Fifth, he examines the family's developmental stage and its performance of the tasks appropriate to that stage. Lastly, he observes the way in which the identified patient's symptoms are used for the maintenance of the family's preferred transactional patterns.

Scripture supports the Structural Family Therapy model in several aspects. It affirms that the family system needs to have a distinct marital subsystem, parental subsystem, and child or sibling subsystem.

Ephesians 6:1-4 (NIV) says,

1 Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

2 "Honor your father and mother"-- which is the first commandment with a promise--

3 "that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.



The Scripture affirms that children are to obey and honor their parents. It implies that parents are to be honorable in their behavior - an appropriate role model. The parents are to bring the children up in the admonition of the Lord. It is implied that there is a definite marital and parental subsystem and a child/sibling subsystem. Children are to honor the boundaries set by their parents as they honor the boundaries laid down by God. Father's are not to provoke their children to anger. How would a father do this? He might do this by being overly critical or in contrast, by being indifferent to his children's needs; by disrespecting or abusing their mother or treating them with disrespect as he provides guidance and discipline. The concept of parental authority and honor finds its source in the Old Testament. Exodus 20:12 (NIV) says, "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you." The Apostle Paul reminds us that this is the first commandment with a promise. In addition to this, there are specific commands and promises given to parents and children in the Bible. Subjects such as discipline (Proverbs 22:6; Proverbs 29:17), mature communication

(Ephesians 4:17-5:7), and familial responsibility (1 Timothy 3:1, 4-5; 5:8) are addressed.

Minuchin (1974, p. 90) offers some questions that the therapist might consider when assessing family health: Who is the family spokesman? If the father is acting as spokesman, what does this mean? Who selected him to make the presentation - to bear the main responsibility for the first contact with a significant extra familial person? Is he taking the spokesman's position because he is the executive head of the family? Or is the mother the true executive leader, who is ceding her power temporarily to the father because of some implicit rule about the proper role of men? What is she doing while her husband talks? Is she tacitly seconding his communications, or is she interfering with them by verbal or nonverbal means? Further, is the content of the verbal communication supported or contradicted by the family's behavior? Is what takes place in the session typical of other moments in the family's life? Would the affective tone of family interaction change if the composition of the session were different? Are the transactions currently underway in the session more significant than those that occurred earlier in the session?

Another contribution Minuchin makes to our understanding of marriage and family dynamics is in the definition of the family developmental lifecycle. It is important for the therapist to recognize the life stage that the family is going through and the way this affects them. Figure 5 breaks these life stages down into a table:

Family Developmental Stages

Stage	Major Task	Initiating Event
Premarital	Differentiating from Family of Origin	Engagement
Marital Dyad	Adjusting to marital roles (Establishing a household)	Marriage
Triad	Adjusting to new child	Birth/adoption of first child
Completed Family	Adjusting to new family members	Birth/adoption of youngest child
Family with adolescents	Increasing flexibility in family systems	Children's differentiating from the family
Launching	Accepting departure of family members	Children's choosing career and marriage partner
Post-launching	Accepting years of aloneness and the aging process	Departure of last child from home

Balswick and Balswick, 1999b, p. 44

Often people experience difficulty or conflicts when transitioning between stages because each represents an adjustment they must make. Each stage represents physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual changes and each requires the person or family system to come to a place of acceptance. In some cases they might be required to grieve the loss of the previous stage before they pass into the next. Dysfunction occurs when they are stuck in a stage.

The family life cycle is affirmed in the Bible when it says that a man and a woman are to leave their parents home, be united to one another, and become one flesh. It implies that each left a family of origin behind in order to be joined with one another. The family that was left behind is presented with the challenge of adjusting to a new life stage. When all of their children leave they will have an "empty nest" and move into the stage of grand parenting as their adult children produce children of their own. Although children will launch from their family of origin they are still responsible to provide for their aging parents. These requirements are identified in Mark 7:10-13 and in 1 Timothy 5:4-8.

A helpful assessment tool is a genogram. It is used to gather family generational information and

interaction patterns. As Gerson, McGoldrick, and Shellenberger (1999, p. 1) point out, "Genograms appeal to clinicians because they are tangible and graphic representations of complex family patterns. They allow the clinician to map the family structure clearly and to note and update the family picture as it emerges." Again, Gerson, McGoldrick, and Shellenberger's (1999, p. 8) writing is pertinent. They write:

Families repeat themselves. What happens in one generation will often repeat itself in the next; that is, the same issues tend to be played out from generation to generation, though the actual behavior may take a variety of forms. Bowen termed this the "multigenerational transmission of family patterns".

The statement supports the Biblical perspective that sinful behavior can be passed from one generation to the next. Moses warned the people in Exodus 20:4-6 (NIV):

4 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below.

5 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me,

6 but showing love to a thousand of those who love me and keep my commandments.

When people choose to turn from the worship of God to idols - such as materialism, religious practices other than Judeo/Christianity, lust for money, sex or power -

then they inflict the emotional or behavioral consequences that accompany these actions upon themselves. As this behavior is modeled and taught, it is likely to be passed from one generation to the next. Some patterns of behavior that can be tracked from generation to generation include divorces, the effects of alcoholism or drug abuse, triangulation and cut-offs, enmeshment, suicide, the birth of illegitimate children, abortions, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses, child abuse, etc. Jesus pronounced a warning in Matthew 18:6-7 (NIV):

6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

7 "Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

The reasons Jesus offered such a strong warning to those who cause "one of these little ones" to sin, is because of the trauma sinful behavior causes upon the next generation. We need only consider the long term affects of child abuse within the generations of a family.

A classic example of generational sin is seen in the genogram of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Scazzero (2003, p. 93-94) provides a helpful diagram that reveals

how sin was passed from Abraham through four generations. Deception was a learned pattern passed from father to son. Abraham lied to Pharoah by telling him his wife, Sarah, was his sister which was a partial truth. He did this because of fear. Rebecca and Isaac's relationship is also dominated by lies and trickery. Jacob's name means, "deceiver". His most notable deception was the stealing of his brother, Esau's birthright, but the plan was hatched by his mother, Rebecca. In later years, Jacob's sons lie about selling their brother Joseph into slavery in Egypt. In addition to deception, the family tree also displays a pattern of father's showing favoritism to a son - from Abraham's love for Isaac, to Isaac's love for Esau, to Jacob's favoritism shown to Joseph and Benjamin.

God warns the reader in Numbers 14:18, "The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation (NIV)." Even though it appears quite dismal for the family, much of the teaching in the New Testament reveals how to break generational dysfunction. So there is hope to overcome these

generational patterns through faith in Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.

Another contribution Family Systems Therapy makes that can be integrated with a Christian approach to counseling is the emphasis upon family communication. Olson and Olson (2000) provide a description and application of *Assertive Communication* (asking for what you need) and *Active Listening* (repeating back to the speaker what you think you have heard). This technique is very effective especially when a couple is dealing with an emotionally packed issue that is causing conflict. Blumberg, Markman, and Stanley (2001) developed a similar communication technique in their therapy, but they label it the *Speaker/Listener Technique*. In their application the speaker has "the floor" in order to state the problem/issue. The listener can only ask questions for clarification or repeat back what they think the speaker is saying. There are many Scriptures that focus on healthy communication. The reader can refer to the appendices for an example of the Scriptures this writer uses in marriage enrichment workshops. Most of these Scriptures are commands "to be" or "act" a certain way when communicating, so these two



techniques can be integrated to form an effective application of scriptural principles of communication.

***An Evaluation of Family Systems  
Therapy and Structural Family Therapy***

Family Systems Theory places primary emphasis upon the importance of the relational dynamics within the whole family unit, however, there are some concepts within this theory that the Christian therapist should employ with caution when integrating this theory. First, Family Systems Theory does not have a clearly developed theory of personality (Butman & Jones, 1991, p. 366). If a member of the family has a personality disorder, the family systems therapist can help the family members develop a strategy for working with the sick person (the identified patient), but the suffering individual may need to receive individual therapy to help them deal with their disorder.

Secondly, Butman and Jones (p. 368) point out that not every problem should be construed as a systems problem. They caution that family therapy can further intensify the "blame your family" approach when dealing with personal problems. Some issues within the family are brought about because of individual choices and the

offender needs to take responsibility for their personal choices or sins.

### ***Cognitive Behavior Therapy***

Corsini and Wedding (1989, p. 285) write, "Cognitive Therapy is based on a theory of personality which maintains that how one thinks largely determines how one feels and behaves." We know that a person's thinking process is primarily influenced by their family of origin, past and present environmental factors, modeling by significant others, the positive/negative reinforcements received both internally and externally, motivational issues, and by hereditary and physiological factors. These all contribute to a person's beliefs and feelings about reality. Many of the assumptions and applications of Cognitive Therapy are compatible with a Christian worldview. The secular model assumes that a person's quality of life is directly affected by their beliefs about reality. The Bible expresses a similar sentiment. In practice, the church takes a very cognitive approach to discipleship as the teaching of Scripture through the pulpit ministry and the educational/small group programs are an appeal to the cognitive and behavioral processes. Unlike Cognitive Behavior Therapy, the church makes an additional appeal

to the spiritual aspect of man. This is why integrating Cognitive Behavior Therapy with the Bible can be so effective in promoting behavioral change and personal growth.

Consider some of the monumental Scriptures that affirm the relationship between one's thought process and one's emotional, spiritual, or behavioral well-being. In Philippians 4:8-9 (NIV) the Apostle Paul writes:

- 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
- 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-- think about such things.
- 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-- put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

The reader will notice several principles that are compatible with Cognitive Behavior Therapy. First, Paul demonstrates that what one thinks upon has a direct bearing on whether or not they will experience emotional peace. The implication is that they could think upon things that *might* happen (what ifs) or they can think upon what *is* actually happening in their life. Paul appeals to them to notice the behavior he is modeling for

them and to put it into practice in their own lives. Both cognitive and behavioral aspects are highlighted here.

In Ephesians 4:22-24 (NIV) another appeal is made to the mind. Paul writes:

22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;  
23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds;  
24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Notice from these verses that change is possible through a spiritual experience which makes one "new in the attitude of their mind." This renewing of the mind has a direct affect upon one's attitude, disposition, and outlook. The person becomes a new self like God in righteous and holy behavior. From a Christian perspective their character is transformed. It begins spiritually with a transformed mind or way of thinking.

A final Scripture comes from Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) which reads:

1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-- this is your spiritual act of worship.  
2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is-- his good, pleasing and perfect will.

The Apostle Paul focuses upon how the cognitive interacts with the spiritual. He highlights the fact that a person can be transformed by the renewing of their mind. Renewing of the mind is a spiritual quality that takes place at regeneration. When this takes place one's outlook, feelings and behavior are affected.

A key concept in Cognitive Behavior Therapy is that a person experiences self-defeating feelings because of their irrational thoughts (beliefs), or what has been labeled as *cognitive distortions* of reality. There are six foundational cognitive distortions identified by Corsini and Wedding which can be integrated with a Christian approach to therapy (1989, p. 295-296):

1. *Arbitrary inference*: Drawing a specific conclusion without supporting evidence or even in the face of contradictory evidence.
2. *Selective abstraction*: Conceptualizing a situation on the basis of a detail taken out of context while ignoring other information.
3. *Overgeneralization*: Abstracting a general rule from one or a few isolated incidents and applying it too broadly and to unrelated situations.
4. *Magnification and minimization*: Seeing something as far more significant or less significant than it actually is.
5. *Personalization*: Attributing external events to oneself without evidence supporting a causal connection.
6. *Dichotomous thinking*: Categorizing experiences in one of two extremes; for example, as complete success or total failure.

The therapist's role is to help the client reframe their thinking process into a more healthy, realistic, and productive manner. Identifying the cognitive distortions is a key to the healing process. From a Christian perspective, distorted thinking can be caused by several factors: It can be caused by sin; from deceptions that we believe from the culture; or ultimately from the spirit realm. The Apostle Paul identified this way of thinking in 2 Corinthians 10:5 (NIV) and tells the reader what to do with these ungodly thoughts.

5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

One can only imagine what feelings and behavior take place when the thoughts are not brought into obedience to Christ. Truth is the key when seeking to experience healthy feelings and behaviors.

### ***Confession and Repentance in Healing***

As mentioned above, the Christian therapist brings a spiritual dimension to counseling. There are two spiritual practices that are related to the cognitive processes. The Bible identifies these as confession and repentance. The importance of confession and repentance

in the change process is brought out more clearly by Propst (1988, p. 63). She argues,

The confrontation and acknowledgment of the darker thoughts is important. "Confess your sins to one another ... that you may be healed..." (James 5:16). The Greek word for confession, *exomologeo*, stresses the idea of acknowledging what is there, and revealing what is hidden. An acknowledgment of evil, the dark, the unpleasant, and of the failures leads to healing.

The task of therapy then is to help the client uncover what is hidden and bring it out into the open where it can be analyzed alongside Biblical truth. Are the hidden thoughts, feelings, or behaviors faulty or misguided? To confess them means to agree with God that they do not conform to His standard and it is creating pain in one's life or in the lives of others.

Working in tandem with confession is the concept of repentance. Propst (1988, p. 73) writes,

Repentance, the necessary precursor of our redemption, is actually *metanoia* (literally to change one's mind). This is not merely the experience of remorse, or an uncomfortable feeling. Rather, repentance implies that one has arrived at a different view of something, an entirely different perspective on the matter (cf. Michel, 1942/1967, pp.626-629). Human repentance results merely in remorse and regret. Divinely inspired repentance is a true change of perspective. A new life does not come from mere remorse, but from a change of perspective.

The process of healing would not be complete if we stopped with confession. We must help the client move towards repentance. It is one thing to agree with God, but to persist in the way one thinks or feels is only a form of free association. Lasting freedom comes from repentance - having a change of mind and a subsequent change in behavior. Repentance creates the spiritual environment for healing and behavioral change to take place.

### ***An Evaluation of Cognitive Behavior Therapy***

When integrating Cognitive Behavior Therapy with a Christian worldview, the therapist needs to keep several underlying philosophies in mind. First, Butman and Jones (1991, p. 207) warn us that there are behavioristic presuppositions that under-gird Cognitive Behavior Therapy. They include atheism, materialism, naturalism, atomism, reductionism, and scientism. These are unacceptable for Christians because they exclude the existence of God, and His supernatural activity. They also attempt to strip humans of their God-given rationality and dignity.

Secondly, the concept of determinism is directly opposed to the Biblical teachings of freedom of choice and freedom to overcome sin as a person lives in unity



with the Holy Spirit. We must remember that God holds us responsible for our actions as we exercise our freedom. We are not just products of our environment reacting to animalistic desires. Thirdly, Cognitive Behavior Therapy leaves out the spiritual aspect of personhood. As Christians we know that this is the most important contributor to growth and well being. As Romans 8:5 (NIV) reads:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.

Although a person can attempt to think positive thoughts and change their self-talk, nothing will change their perspective and motivation more than when they have a spiritual experience with Jesus Christ and they are born again.

### ***Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy***

Similar to Cognitive Behavior Therapy, REBT is easily integrated with Christian counseling principles because it teaches that correct thinking produces healthy feelings and the result is appropriate behavior. Butman and Jones (1991, p. 179) say that REBT has replaced Transactional Analysis as the secular therapy model most adapted for Christian consumption. They warn that there

are some underlying assumptions and philosophies in REBT that the Christian therapist must keep in mind when integrating its' principles into practice.

One need only read the literature of REBT to discover its underlying philosophy. Ellis and MacLaren (1998, p. 14-15) state that REBT is postmodern and is opposed to absolute "musts" and "shoulds" with the notion of absolute truth. Its main postmodern ideas are these:

1. Perhaps some kind of indubitable objective reality or thing itself exists, but we only seem to know it through our fallible, personal-social, different and changing human perceptions. We do not have any absolute certainty about what reality is or what it will be - despite our being often strongly convinced that we do.
2. Our views of what is good or bad, what is right and wrong, what is moral and immoral are largely personal-social constructions. The identification of universal truths is an impossible task and all ethical beliefs have a constructive nature.
3. Although human personality has some important innate and fairly fixed elements, it also largely arises from relational and social influences and is much less individualistic than is commonly thought.
4. People are importantly influenced or conditioned by their cultural rearing. Their behaviors are amazingly multicultural and there is no conclusive evidence that their diverse cultures are right or wrong, better or worse than others.
5. Just about all solutions we strive to achieve for our problems depend on choosing our goals and purposes from which to work. These are always arguable, never absolute. We can arrive at a consensus as to what goals and purposes to choose but not at any absolute agreement as to which are better or worse.

There are two Christian writers who integrate Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy and Cognitive Therapy with theological concepts to form a Christian approach to therapy. Both writers apply the ABC's of REBT to their models. The first is *Telling Yourself the Truth* (Backus & Chapien, 2000); the second is *Lies We Believe* (Thurman, 1999). Backus and Chapien (2000) label their approach "misbelief therapy". Their thesis is that what you think and believe will determine how you feel and what you do. If a person entertains "misbeliefs", which are lies or half truths, and they persist in deceiving themselves with these misbeliefs, then they will experience emotional turmoil, maladaptive behavior, or mental illness. An example of a misbelief is when we tell ourselves, "It will be horrible if no one talks to me at social gatherings (of if I don't know the people). It is horrible to feel self-conscious and nervous." The truth is, "I can enjoy myself wherever I go, and I do not need to have someone to talk to in order to have a good time. Feelings of self-consciousness won't kill me (Backus & Chapien, 2000, p. 21). The therapist helps the client identify misbeliefs that cause feelings such as depression, anger, anxiety, lack of self-control, self-hate, a variety of fears, and feelings of being

indispensable, then the therapist counteracts them by truth statements.

Thurman (1999) also integrates REBT theory within a Biblical framework for therapy and personal self-help. He writes:

One of the main challenges in living our lives well, then, is not to alter the unpleasant circumstances surrounding us, although there is nothing wrong with improving them when we can. The challenge here is to make our mental tapes as truthful as possible so that we can live life the way it was meant to be lived - experiencing emotional health, intimate relationships, and a deep sense of purpose. Thoughts produce after their own kind: lies produce death; truth produces life (Thurman, 1999, p. 6).

Thurman identifies numerous lies that we tell ourselves in a variety of settings and circumstances. Then he exposes the lies by applying the truth to them. Each chapter ends with "Growth Work" for an application of the truth and for personal reflection. These two Christian applications are resources this writer will use in order to offer hope and healing in the counseling setting when applying REBT principles.

### ***An Evaluation of Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy***

The writer of this thesis observes that REBT is atheistic, humanistic, and hedonistic. A behavior, belief, or emotion is not judged to be wrong or problematic unless it causes the individual distress.

Truth is subjective and relative. Butman and Jones (1991, p. 190-191) argue that Ellis relies solely on a pragmatic standard when defining normal behavior. A belief is considered to be irrational only if it does not assist the individual in obtaining maximal longevity and happiness. This relative standard for right and wrong allows people to define their own standard. Obviously this directly contradicts the Christian world view that the Bible is God's universal standard for truth, healthy thinking, moral behavior, and spirituality. If the Christian therapist is aware of this postmodern bent, Ellis' identification of distorted thinking patterns and his formula for refuting these thoughts are very useful concepts for equipping a client in the change process.

### ***Conclusion***

Chapter 3 has presented four secular therapeutic perspectives that can be integrated within a Christian framework for counseling. Family Systems Theory contributes the perspective that behaviors within a family system are interrelated. By analyzing the family constellation, assessing differentiation among family members, and identifying emotional triangles, the therapist can find leverage points that may be used to bring about healthy changes within the family system.

Structural Family Therapy is closely related to Family Systems Therapy but adds the dimension of the analysis of boundaries within the family subsystems, proper alignment of subsystems, and the distribution of power within the family.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy contribute the perspective that what one believes about reality has a direct affect upon how they feel and their subsequent behavior. As the therapist and client dialogue about the client's beliefs concerning a distressing situation, they can identify underlying beliefs or assumptions that are irrational and then they can help the client restructure their thinking which provides them with more adaptive feelings and ways of coping. Many of the secular theories allow the client to define normalcy by their own subjective standard. From a Christian perspective the Bible provides the standard for normalcy and healthy functioning.

## **Chapter 4**

### **A Marriage and Family Case Study**

#### ***Sandra's Family History***

Sandra is of African-American descent, age 29. She grew up in the Bronx, New York. She has been married for nine years to Alan. Their relationship has produced two young sons and a daughter. Sandra was raised primarily by her grandmother, Francis, who she describes as her "real" mother. When Sandra was young she spent most of her time at her grandmother's house. After her mother, Vicki, married a military man and moved to Germany for two years, Sandra went to live with her grandparents permanently. She had the opportunity to live with her mother upon her return from Germany and even had a room at her mother's home around the block, but felt that her grandparents had a more stable home. Since she spent so much time there already, she felt that she might as well just stay there permanently and she was encouraged by her grandparents to do so. She lived with them until graduating from high school and then she left to attend Virginia Commonwealth University.

Francis took her four children to church when they were young, but by the time her granddaughter, Sandra, began attending church with her, they (her aunts, uncles,

and mother) had grown into young adulthood and moved out of the house. Sandra vividly remembers a day when church attendance and their lifestyle changed. She and her grandmother attended a little Pentecostal church which was led by a female minister. The church ministered to many people who were recovering from alcohol and drug abuse, prostitution, divorce, poverty, etc. On one occasion her grandmother accepted Jesus as her Savior and Lord. From that point forward whenever the church doors were open, Sandra and her grandmother were in attendance. Sandra also professed faith in Christ as a youth. They not only attended all services, but they volunteered to serve in the church soup kitchen on many occasions.

Francis made sure that Sandra was raised in a safe environment. She was a strong, assertive grandmother who didn't tolerate disrespect. She didn't believe she needed to give an explanation for the rules in her house - what she said went! On the other hand, Sandra's grandfather, Maurice, was not a religious man. He worked hard but also drank and gambled occasionally. Although he had some vices, he was a good provider for the family. If he came home drunk, Francis would just give him a look and he would quietly go into the other room. The only "normal" marriage Sandra witnessed was that of her Uncle



Frank and Aunt Tanisha. They struggled in their relationship when they were a young couple, but they remained committed to one another throughout their early adult years.

Sandra's mother, Vicki, seemed to lead a secret life away from her extended family. She never married Sandra's father and she has never shared anything about him with Sandra. Her second husband, Devon was in the military. When they married, Vicki didn't invite Sandra to their wedding. They later divorced and she then married a man named Robert. This marriage only lasted two years, but they had a son, Jeremiah, who is a hydrocephalic. He is now ten years old. Sandra and Vicki have a relationship that is distant and strained. Vicki has a victim's mentality, she makes excuses for her behavior, she is dependent upon others, and she refuses to take responsibility for many of the things that have taken place in her life. She just says that she did the best she could have under the circumstances.

### ***Sandra's Genogram***

Some of Sandra's ancestors came to the United States from the Bahamas. They settled around Columbia, South Carolina (see Sandra's genogram in Appendix A). Her great-grandfather (Mother's side) was married and

fathered several children with Sandra's great-grandmother, but for reasons unknown to Sandra, he moved with all of their children to New York City leaving his wife in South Carolina. Sandra doesn't know any of the details surrounding their separation. Her grandmother, Francis, was only 9 years old when this took place. Sandra's great-grandfather never divorced his wife, but developed a new relationship with a woman who raised Francis and the other children along with her own children. Sandra's great-grandfather and great-grandmother eventually reunited in New York City after Francis was a grown adult. When they were reunited, her great-grandmother brought her children with her from a relationship she had with a man after Sandra's great-grandfather left her. Sandra's great-grandmother is still living but very frail.

When analyzing Sandra's genogram there are several patterns that are evident. There is a pattern of divorce or separation for several generations. As mentioned above, Sandra's great-grandparents separated but didn't divorce and were reunited in later years. Her grandmother, Francis, was married to Anthony and had one child with him, Vicki, who is Sandra's mother. They divorced and she married Maurice having three children,

Bradford, Tanisha, and Maurice Jr. with him. There is some mystery surrounding the real father of Bradford. Maurice acted as father to all of the children, including Vicki, but he was partial to Maurice Jr. Vicki had numerous relationships with men, including two divorces. Sandra never met her own father and knows nothing about him. Her Uncle Bradford was married for three years to Wanda but later divorced. Bradford has had drug problems so he has maintained some distance from the family. He disappears for periods of time and then reemerges.

As noted above in Sandra's family history, Sandra's grandmother, Francis, was the matriarch of the family. She kept the family connected while she was alive. They shared family dinners and she maintained their family traditions. All of her children complain that they each had it worse than one another while living under her watchful care.

There have been numerous relational triangles within the family system. Francis was close to Sandra and triangulated with her against Vicki. The triangulation was probably necessary since Vicki was secretive, irresponsible, and Sandra was a child in need of protection, guidance, and stability. Francis was close to her daughter, Tanisha. Sandra's grandfather

Maurice was close to Maurice Jr., but not to the step-children. Bradford and Vicki seemed to have a close relationship. Tanisha and Maurice Jr. have maintained a close relationship as well. Tanisha and Vicki have attempted to get closer to one another since the death of Francis. Maurice Jr. and Vicki live twenty minutes away from one another but do not converse much or spend time together. Sandra indicated that the extended family has been disconnected since the death of Francis since she networked the relationships among them.

### ***The Effects of the Family System***

Sandra has emerged from her family of origin to be happily married for 9 years. She and Alan have three beautiful, young children - two boys and one girl. Although there have been several generations in her family of origin marked by promiscuity, cohabitation, and divorce, Sandra has not repeated this cycle of behavior, however, she was pregnant with her first child before Alan and she were married. She and one Aunt are the first two members of the family to maintain committed marriage relationships. Sandra is concerned that she understands how to have a healthy relationship with Alan since she never knew her father. She desires to have realistic expectations of him as a husband and father.

At times she is unsure of her own parenting skills in comparison to Alan, since he had a "normal" home.

Sandra seeks a connection to her family of origin. In some ways she has taken the place of her grandmother as a "rallying point" for her family. She spends a lot of time on the phone and computer networking with family members and encouraging their contact with one another on birthdays and important holidays. Her mother, Vicki, now seeks to have a relationship with her. In many respects Sandra is a parent to her mother.

Sandra feels driven to succeed. She is the first in her family to leave the Bronx. She is the first to complete her college degree. She and Alan recently purchased their first home. Their two sons both attend Christian school and they are active in many extra curricular activities. She feels guilty for their success.

Sandra and Alan are very involved in their church. She is on staff as the church administrator. She also is the leader of the women's ministry. Alan is a youth leader and teaches Sunday school and men's group. Both Alan and Sandra feel called to the ministry and have been licensed by their church. Much of the credit for Sandra's

Christian commitment can be traced back to the spiritual values instilled in her by her grandmother, Francis.

### ***Alan's Family History***

Alan is of African-American ancestry, age 29. He is the older of two sons in his family. The family can trace their ancestry back to slavery in South Carolina. His parent's families were both from separate plantations that were adjacent to one another. When pressed to provide more information about his family background Alan was reluctant to do so, but stated that his mother could answer most of the questions as she had done the family research. When pressed for genogram information, he would change the subject or be evasive when questioned, so the therapist finally stopped probing.

Alan's parents have been married for over 30 years. He was born in South Carolina but they moved to New York City when he was a youngster. He attended a private Catholic school and his parents provided well for him. Both parents worked full-time jobs - his mother was a nurse and his father a postal delivery driver. Since Alan's parents led such busy lives, he came and went as he pleased but he was still a responsible son. He got involved with drugs and would sometimes skip school but still managed to complete his studies so his misbehavior

went undetected. His mother was the dominant and aggressive member of the parental subsystem and his father was compliant and kind but struggled with alcoholism. Alan blamed his mother for driving his father to alcohol as she was described by Alan as being, "overbearing, intrusive, and demanding". He feels some animosity towards his mother but speaks well of his father. Alan joined the Marines out of high school and was in the Marines when he met Sandra and married.

Alan takes pride in his accomplishments. It was important that his parents visit them recently so he could show them his new house, his family, his church, and his place of employment. Alan feels pressure to succeed for his family. The pressure might be due to the fact that his brother is mentally handicapped. Alan is concerned that he will have to care for his brother after his parents are deceased, but he is willing to do so. Although it is important to Alan that his parents notice his success, he wants to maintain some distance from them. The geographical distance between them might be a metaphor for his need to maintain emotional distance and his desire for autonomy. He has no desire to be close to some of his extended family members. He describes his

uncles as alcoholics and losers - the type of people that he doesn't want to be around.

### ***The Treatment Plan***

The therapist initially met with Sandra for three sessions, then suggested that she and Alan consider attending counseling together. The purpose would be to improve communication, increase their understanding of one another, learn better conflict resolution skills, and improve their overall level of marital satisfaction. The assessment tool that was used to help Alan and Sandra come to a better understanding of themselves and one another was the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (Morrison & Taylor, 2002). The therapist also had Alan and Sandra take the Prepare/Enrich Assessment (Olson, 2002), which employs a wide range of questions that measure a couple's level of marital satisfaction. The inventory results are then applied in eight counseling sessions, all addressing satisfaction/dissatisfaction issues. The outcome of the treatment plan will be discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis which demonstrates that there is hope for a couple to overcome family of origin deficiencies and develop a healthy functioning life together.



## **Chapter 5**

### **The Outcomes of Therapy**

The therapist met with Sandra for three individual counseling sessions concerning personal issues that had arisen during her deployment to Iraq. After meeting with Sandra three times, the therapist invited Sandra and Alan to enter couple counseling. Once it was decided that Alan would attend, the therapist met with Alan informally in order to build rapport and to gather personal background information. The Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (Morrison & Taylor, 2002) was given to each of them individually with one session for the interpretation of the results. The TJTA was administered so Sandra and Alan could understand themselves and also one another better. Their profiles were referenced several times during couple therapy.

#### ***Sessions 1-3 with Sandra***

While Sandra was deployed to Iraq, she experienced some emotional trauma from the daily rocket and mortar attacks by the insurgents. At one point, an airman was killed and several others were injured when a mortar exploded in their tent. Sandra was required to move around in the darkness while the attack was in progress instead of staying down in a safe place. This made her

feel vulnerable. For a period of time she experienced combat stress symptoms. She was afraid that she would be hit by a mortar or rocket. She felt "fuzzy" in her thinking process and she had a difficult time concentrating. In addition to the stress from combat, her supervising officer was difficult to work with so she felt emotionally traumatized by his behavior. She was forced to leave Iraq after only serving 45 days of a 90 day deployment. She grew up with great admiration and respect for those in authority so this incident caused her to be disillusioned for a period of time.

In addition, Sandra felt that she had failed by not completing her tour of duty. When she returned to her home base following the deployment, her supervising officer requested that she not talk about her combat experience so she felt that no one understood what she had been through. She sought counseling from a civilian therapist in order to process some of her emotions. Then she sought out my support. Since this writer has also been deployed to Iraq, he was able to validate her experience, so after a period of time she no longer experienced any emotional issues from the deployment. She indicated that occasionally she remembered the conflict with her deployed supervising officer so felt

sad that they were unable to reconcile. However, she was at peace since she had done all she could to seek reconciliation with him. She has come to understand that he also was dealing with some mental/stress issues of his own. She has finally come to a point of healing.

Sandra also feels guilty for her and Alan's success. After listening to her point of view, the therapist suggested that God is blessing them for their faithfulness and obedience to Him. They can be proud of their accomplishments. The therapist gathered family background information from Sandra. Sandra indicated that she and Alan would both like to see him for therapy so an appointment was scheduled. The Taylor Johnson Temperament Analysis was given to Sandra for self-understanding, and so she could understand Alan's temperament better as well (see Appendix B).

### ***Sandra's Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis***

There are nine traits that are profiled on the Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis (TJTA). Sandra was in the *Excellent* range on two, the *Acceptable* range on one and *Improvement Desirable* on six. She was not in the *Improvement Needed* range on any of the traits.

Sandra tested in the *Improvement Desirable* range for the Nervous vs. Composed and Depressive vs. Light-hearted

scales. She scored in the 51st percentile for Nervous vs. Composed and 52 percentile for Depressive vs. Light-hearted. She has been experiencing mild depression since coming back from a military deployment to Iraq. By her own admission, she feels "tired and worn down". We explored several factors that could be contributing to these feelings. The lack of sunshine with long periods of darkness in Alaska during the mid-winter months could be a contributor to her melancholy. The busy schedule her family keeps could be the cause of her fatigue. In addition, at the time she took the inventory, she was pregnant which physically brought on hormonal changes and an increased need for rest.

Sandra scored in the 79th percentile on Active-Social vs. Quiet which is in the *Excellent* range. She is a very active person who enjoys social gatherings and interaction, especially with close friends. She keeps in regular contact with a network of friends via e-mail and telephone. She enjoys church social functions and conversing with others.

Sandra scored in the 90th percentile for Expressive-Responsive vs. Inhibited. This too, is in the *Excellent* range. She communicates well and is generally outgoing. She enjoys laughing and having a good time. She readily

expresses her opinions about moral issues and injustice but she does so in a kind and thoughtful manner.

Sandra scored in the 43rd percentile on Sympathetic vs. Indifferent. The score indicated that *Improvement Desired*. The therapist and Sandra were both surprised that she did not score higher on the Sympathetic Scale. It might be due to the fact that many of the questions dealt with her feelings about people who are suffering in the world instead of people that are close acquaintances. Sandra's friends and family view her as a very sympathetic person. Many of them turn to her for support. She also desires to go into the pastoral ministry because she cares so much about people.

Sandra scored in the 24th percentile on Objective vs. Subjective. She is in the *Excellent* area for objectivity. She is fair minded, logical and reasonable in her outlook on life. She and her husband, Alan, have shown wisdom in many of the important decisions they have made in life and they are reaping the benefits of their thoughtful planning.

On Dominance vs. Submissive, Sandra scored in the 99th percentile. She was in the *Improvement needed* range. As mentioned above, her grandmother was quite domineering. She held the family system together through

communication, networking the relationships, keeping people connected, and by showing her approval or disapproval on their decisions or behavior. The therapist has not observed Sandra as a domineering person.

Instead, she is assertive in her work environment and family life. It has taken much courage and assertiveness for her to rise out of the Bronx, complete her bachelors degree from Virginia Commonwealth, join the military, work on a Masters of Divinity degree and raise a family.

On the Hostile vs. Tolerant scale, Sandra scored in the 64th percentile which was in the *Improvement Desirable* range. She was surprised that her score leaned more toward hostility than tolerance. She is not an angry person, but she is willing to confront injustice. She also can be somewhat critical or judgmental of others as she has high standards for herself and other people. She may inherit this from her grandmother. She maintains strong moral and spiritual convictions. Sandra has strong opinions about behavior that she doesn't agree with, but she often keeps them to herself. She is a fair-minded and gracious person.

Finally, Sandra scored in the 92nd percentile on Self-discipline vs. Impulsive which is in the *Excellent* range. She has observed the pain associated with

impulsive behavior. Many of her female friends have experienced divorce and have had children with different fathers. Sandra, on the other hand, has demonstrated self-discipline by completing her education, by nurturing a beautiful, loving family with her husband, and by reaching financial goals which includes the purchase of a new house. One need only be around Sandra's children for a short time and observe that her children are well behaved and respectful of adults, which further demonstrates that she is teaching them to be self-discipline. She and Alan have also had steady long-term employment.

Sandra was neutral on the attitude scale which means she had little test taking bias. She was not overly critical of herself nor did she attempt to make herself look more favorable to others. The TJTA reveals patterns which in combination with one another indicate dysfunction or areas of concern. Sandra did not exhibit any of these negative patterns.

### ***Sessions 1-3 with Alan***

As mentioned above, the therapist met with Alan informally for two sessions in order to build rapport. The sessions were more get acquainted times than anything else. They discussed his work, family, children, and

church ministry. After the second session, the therapist administered the TJTA to Alan while interpreting the results for him during session three (see Appendix C). This was administered in order to give Alan a better understanding of himself and also of Sandra. His results are discussed below.

### ***Alan's Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis***

On the TJTA Alan was in the *Excellent* range on no items, the *Acceptable* range on five items, *Improvement Desirable* range on two items, and *Improvement Needed* on two items. Alan tested at the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile in the *Improvement Needed* range on Nervous vs. Composed. The score shows that he tends to be tense, high-strung and apprehensive in contrast to calm, relaxed, and tranquil. He has a tendency to keep himself very busy at work as well as in his personal life. Alan is a real conversationalist. He seems nervous when confronted with silence so he will often talk incessantly to fill in the void.

On the Depressive vs. Lighthearted scale Alan tested in the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile, toward lighthearted. The score was in the *Acceptable* range. Lighthearted is described as happy, cheerful, and optimistic in contrast to pessimistic, discouraged and dejected. He seems to have



a very positive outlook on life and believes that life is good and his plans will succeed. He envisions a bright future.

Alan tested in the 51<sup>st</sup> percentile on the Active-Social vs. Quiet scale. The score is in the *Acceptable* range. This indicates that he has a healthy balance between being socially active and quiet. Active-Social is energetic, enthusiastic, socially involved in contrast to socially inactive, lethargic, withdrawn. Alan's job requires that he possess good public relations skill. He is involved in his church as a board member, youth leader, and Bible study teacher. Although he is active in his church and in other social settings, he admits to Sandra that he attends some of the church social functions (potlucks) because he knows she and the kids enjoy it but he prefers to be at home alone or just with his immediate family.

Alan scored in the 68<sup>th</sup> Percentile on Expressive-Responsive vs. Inhibited. The score is in the *Acceptable* range and indicates that he is generally spontaneous, affectionate and demonstrative in contrast to restrained, unresponsive, and repressed. When one is around Alan it doesn't take long to realize that he is open and honest with his feelings. He enjoys talking about issues and is

very demonstrative. He easily dominates the conversation and moves from subject-to-subject. If the other person doesn't talk or interject anything, Alan will carry the conversation indefinitely.

On the Sympathetic-Indifferent scale Alan scored a 51st percentile in the *Acceptable* range. The score indicates that he leans more toward being kind, understanding and compassionate in contrast to unsympathetic, insensitive, and unfeeling. He generally cares about those who are less fortunate and he is able to show them compassion. He is able to understand another person's perspective and he is sensitive to their feelings.

On the Subjective-Objective scale, Alan scored at 62nd percentile. He is on the borderline between *Acceptable* and *Improvement Desirable* range. The score indicates that Alan has a tendency to lean more toward being emotional, illogical and self-absorbed. In talking to him, he sometimes makes statements that seem arrogant. He also seems to think his perspective is always correct and other people are wrong.

Alan scored in the 97th percentile on the Dominant-Submissive scale. The score suggests that he is confident, assertive, and competitive as opposed to

passive, compliant and dependent. Alan seems to be assertive and confident in most of the things he does. He is a member of the main decision-making board at his church. He is not afraid to confront others or share his opinion of how things should be. He leads the youth group and challenges them in their Christian walk. Alan is a loan officer for a worldwide bank chain. He is required to possess good public relations skills. He has petitioned his superiors for job advancements.

Alan scored in the 94th percentile on the Hostile-Tolerant scale. He was in the *Improvement* needed range which indicates that he is critical, argumentative, and punitive. During my last counseling appointment with Sandra and Alan this tendency emerged. Sandra indicated that she and Alan disagree in the way they discipline the children - she thinks he is overly punitive at times. She also felt that he is overly critical of her parenting skills as she is more of a nurturer than Alan. He criticized her for threatening the kids with discipline but not following through with punishment. She said he tended to be too punitive - the punishment didn't fit the crime.

In the final area Alan was in the 51st percentile between Self-disciplined-Impulsive. His score indicated

that he was in the *Acceptable* range. Alan tends to be controlled, methodical and persevering as opposed to uncontrolled, disorganized and changeable. His job requires that he be highly organized. Everything within his home seems to have its place as their house is very clean and things are arranged in an orderly fashion. Alan indicated that his closet and his things are well organized. He prefers to do his own laundry. He usually wears a suit to work. He is very fashionable in his attire. Alan was a Marine so he carries this discipline over into his personal life and family life. He is able to make plans and stick to them until complete. He sets goals and reaches them.

One area that is of concern is that Alan is high in Dominant-Submissive and High in Hostile-Tolerant. He tends to be more subjective in his outlook on life. This could indicate that he is more self-centered and defensive when his faults are pointed out. He may be overly judgmental or critical, thinking that his way of doing things is best. This pattern emerged several times during our counseling sessions and was addressed.

### ***Couple Therapy***

For counseling purposes the Enrich Version 2000, developed by Life Innovations, Inc., was administered to

Alan and Sandra as an assessment tool. This inventory assesses the level of couple satisfaction/dissatisfaction and couple agreement/disagreement on a number of questions. The subsequent fourteen page report reveals whether a couple is *Vitalized*, *Harmonious*, *Traditional*, *Conflicted*, or *Devitalized* in their relationship (see Appendix D). Alan and Sandra are a conflicted couple as they disagreed on many of the questions in the inventory. The two areas where they had the most couple agreement were *Sexual Relationship* at 70% and *Spiritual Beliefs* at 100%. The results of their assessment were used as a guide for their counseling sessions and homework assignments. In addition, their therapy was supplemented with other homework exercises.

### ***The First Session***

During the first session the therapist asked the question, "What do you want to achieve as a result of this counseling?" Alan said that he wanted to improve their communication, enhance their friendship, be able to share his feelings more deeply with Sandra, and refresh his expression of love for her. Sandra indicated that she wanted to enhance their strong points as a couple, improve communication, and reevaluate couple and individual goals. The therapist had them identify the

top three strengths of their relationship. Alan identified *Children and Parenting* first (which is a growth area); next *Spiritual Beliefs* (which they had 100% couple agreement on); and lastly, *Role Relationship* (which was a possible strength area). Sandra identified *Spiritual Beliefs* as her number one choice (which they had 100% couple agreement on); *Children and Parenting* as a second choice (which is a growth area); and *Leisure Activities* as her third choice (this was a possible strength area). They went through their answers with the therapist question by question noticing areas of disagreement while discussing the implications. The discussion revealed that they were unified in their spiritual beliefs which created a solid foundation in their relationship.

The discussion on *Children and Parenting* the therapist commended them for the solid boundaries and structure they have provided for their family. They have well defined parent and child subsystems with solid boundaries that govern the interaction that takes place. Their children are well behaved and respectful of authority. They have a regular, predictable schedule that they follow most every day and on the weekends. This includes, preparation for the day, after school

sporting activities, eating meals as a family, and attending church functions. The children are expected to complete their homework then do their chores. These are appropriate for their ages. When they do not obey the rules they are disciplined.

In addition to this, the children are not allowed to interfere when Alan and Sandra are conflicted while discussing issues. Although they have a well defined structure with appropriate boundaries, there is some disagreement in this area. Sandra did not feel that Alan spent enough time with the children. They also did not share agreement on how to discipline the children. Sandra thinks that Alan is too strict but he believes she threatens the children with punishment but does not follow through consistently. She feels judged and unappreciated as a mother. Since she did not grow up with a father in the home (other than her grandfather) she feels insecure when comparing her and Alan's parenting ability - are her expectations of Alan valid or unrealistic? Is she right or is he right when it comes to discipline of the children? Sandra's greatest concern was that these issues with the children might be creating emotional distance between her and Alan. The therapist gave Sandra a book, *Boundaries with Kid's*, by Cloud and

Townsend (2001), to help Sandra and Alan add to their parenting skills. The therapist suggested that Sandra and Alan's differences could be used as strengths as they can balance one another between discipline and nurture. However, they both needed to support one another in front of the children in order to avoid triangulation and conflicts during the teen years.

Another area of concern was in the roles that each of them fulfill within their home. Alan identified their roles as a strength area but when the therapist began to discuss the questions associated with this item, it became evident that Sandra didn't agree with him. She felt that their household responsibilities were unfairly distributed. The reason for this is because Alan works full-time thirty miles from home and Sandra works outside the home part-time, so she was willing to be flexible on this issue. She did feel strongly that he didn't appreciate all the things she did around the house. She wished he would show more appreciation. She hoped that he might be unwilling to make adjustments in this area, but Alan liked the way things were.

The final area that was identified by Sandra as a strength area was *Leisure Activities*. The couple agreed that they enjoy many of the same activities and that



neither spends an excessive amount of time doing their own hobbies or activities in detriment to their time together. However, they both felt that they would like to spend more time together. They are in a childrearing stage and living at a considerable distance from their extended families, so they have very little couple time alone with one another at this stage in their family life cycle. One of the differences that they are somewhat conflicted on is that Sandra enjoys social activities and Alan enjoys time by himself, or just with her and the children. He usually accompanies the family to church social functions, but doesn't enjoy them as much as Sandra. He indicated that it was one of the personal sacrifices he makes for the good of the family. So, at times Sandra and Alan differ as to what constitutes a good time socially.

The homework assignment for the first session was for Alan and Sandra to create a wish list of three things they would like their spouse to do more often. They would discuss their wish list in session two.

### ***The Second Session***

The second session was pivotal as Sandra and Alan were more transparent with the therapist and with one another. Up to this point they had been somewhat guarded

and everything seemed to be great between them. One of the trends on their assessment was that Alan was optimistic that everything in their relationship was great. Sandra was a realist - that there were some issues between the two of them. In this session the therapist encouraged them to share the things they would like their spouse to do more often. Alan wished that Sandra would be more sensitive to his preference of having a few close friends instead of many acquaintances. He didn't appreciate church social activities very much with all of the meaningless small talk. Secondly, he wished she would be more assertive with the discipline of the children. He believes that Sandra threatens the children too much and doesn't follow through with her threats. This drew a reaction from Sandra as she felt that he was overly punitive with the children and sometimes the punishment didn't fit the crime. Thirdly, Alan stated that he wanted her to be less critical of his choices. Several times while Alan shared Sandra disagreed with him. When he accused her of being overly critical and mean to him, she reacted by asking the therapist if he really believed Alan's accusations were true? The therapist appreciated their honesty and felt in future sessions they should take another personality assessment

so they could learn to appreciate one another's personalities better.

Next it was Sandra's turn to share. First, she said that she wanted them to communicate better on major issues so they could put forth a concerted effort. She wanted them to recognize that they are a partnership. She felt that they needed to plan better than they do currently. Alan tends to be flexible and plan as he goes. This indicated a major area of personality difference between them so they needed to become more accepting of one another's differences and learn to compromise more. Secondly, Sandra wished they could celebrate their accomplishments more - to enjoy the moment and their achievements - instead of being so serious about life. Her third wish was that they would be more relaxed with their immediate family - enjoy the kids and the time they share together with them. Sandra's wish may be related to the fact that Alan is more punitive and uptight. Alan's inflexibility was an issue that they needed to explore at a future session.

Obviously they were conflicted in some areas so the therapist finished the session by introducing them to the *Speaker/Listener Technique* (Blumberg, Markman, and Stanley, 2001), and the *Assertiveness and Active*

*Listening Technique* (Olson, 2004). The therapist believes that Sandra has feelings that she stuffs because Alan invalidates her emotions. The therapist heard him say that he "just isn't a sensitive guy", however this is a necessary skill Alan must learn in order to meet Sandra's needs. Their assessment indicated that Alan was unaware of Sandra's negative feelings concerning their relationship. Alan thinks everything is great! On the other hand, Sandra indicated that she stuffs her feelings because Alan is unsympathetic and he is not going to change anyway.

### ***The Third Session***

Following session two, the therapist gave Sandra and Alan the homework assignment to watch a video from the Empowering Couples program (Olson and Olson, 2000), which demonstrated the assertiveness and active listening skills. For session three they reviewed this technique. In addition, the therapist gave Alan and Sandra some handouts on the value of the *Speaker/Listener Technique* by Blumberg, Markman, and Stanley (2001). They reviewed the ground rules for using this technique and how it promotes healthy communication. Furthermore, they looked at some Scripture verses which encouraged assertiveness and active listening (see Appendix E). Alan was

frustrated with this technique because as he lamented, "it isn't my style." The therapist believed that it was necessary for them to learn this technique because Alan often invalidated Sandra's feelings and opinions about many things. As long as issues did not directly affect him, he felt they were unimportant. So the therapist asked Alan, "What if something is important to Sandra but not to you - how should you respond?" After some discussion Alan was beginning to understand that he needed to listen to Sandra and validate her opinions, feelings or perspective even if he didn't feel it was important. Alan needed to develop more empathy and understanding for Sandra's point of view.

Following this interaction, the therapist gave Alan and Sandra a worksheet called, *Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict* (Olson, 2004), (see Appendix F). The therapist suggested that they use this model when discussing a sensitive issue. The therapist also pointed out that the purpose of step three in the ten step process was to help them consider how they each personally contribute to the problem. In order to resolve conflict they must each possess self-focus skills - the ability to see how they directly contribute to the

conflict. The ability to possess "self-focus" is given further definition by Guerin, Fay, Burden, & Kautto, (1987, p. 129).

Next, Alan and Sandra looked at their responses to the individual statements which were listed under *Conflict Resolution* in their assessment. They had 20% couple agreement on the questions in this section. The first question they addressed was, "When we discuss problems, my partner understands my opinions and ideas." They both disagreed with the statement indicating that they didn't feel understood by their partner. The next statement read, "Even during disagreements, I can share my feelings and ideas with my partner." Alan said that he agreed with the statement, but Sandra said she strongly disagreed. Alan is the more talkative one in their couple relationship and he often talks incessantly without pausing to listen. He holds very strong opinions about many things. As mention above, Sandra often feels devalued and invalidated by Alan. He will often tell her that she shouldn't feel a certain way or that the things she cares about are unimportant. The therapist pointed out the importance of validation in healthy communication and had Sandra share more of her feelings concerning this issue.

Alan and Sandra both agreed with the statement, "At times I feel some of our differences never get resolved." This indicated invalidation was a pattern. The therapist shared a simple communication principle that they both needed to seek to understand one another and then be understood. This required active listening from each of them. Next they addressed the statement, "To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend to say nothing." Alan stated that he disagreed with this statement, but Sandra agreed with it indicating that Alan freely shares his feelings or opinions, but she didn't feel as free to do so. The last statement they addressed was, "When we argue, I usually end up feeling responsible for the problem." Alan checked that he disagreed with this statement and Sandra answered that she strongly agreed. The therapist asked Sandra to give Alan more feedback on her response. Sandra felt that she has a tendency to take responsibility for their problems more than she should. Since Alan is a talker, it could be that he is able to talk his way out of a conflict and project the issue onto Sandra. In addition, Sandra didn't feel a sense of equality in her relationship with Alan and at times felt "put down" by him.

Much of Sandra's dissatisfaction seemed to focus on feeling invalidated by Alan. This issue would continue to be addressed as therapy progressed. Alan later privately shared with the therapist that he and Sandra "had to get married" due to an unplanned pregnancy. Although the pregnancy was unexpected, he loved her very much and was planning to wed her anyway, but the surprise pregnancy required that they marry sooner than planned. They weren't able to engage in premarital counseling nor were they able to spend couple time together before their first child arrived. He was thankful for the counseling because it was helping them revisit some areas that they had never fully resolved.

#### ***The Fourth Session***

During the fourth session the therapist focused upon personality issues in marriage. Alan and Sandra's Enrich Report revealed only 30% positive couple agreement to the ten questions that addressed personality issues. Sandra agreed with the statement, "Sometimes I am concerned about my partner's temper." They both strongly agreed to the statement, "I am sometimes concerned that my partner appears to be unhappy and withdrawn." Alan agreed with the statement, "My partner has some personal habits that bother me." Sandra strongly agreed with the following



statements, "Sometimes my partner is too stubborn"; "I wish my partner were less critical or negative about some topics"; "Sometimes I have difficulty dealing with my partner's moodiness"; "Sometimes my partner seems to be too controlling".

Due to their dissatisfaction the therapist had Alan and Sandra complete *The Personality Self-Portrait Inventory* with the *Interpretation Guide* by Oldham and Morris (1995), (see Appendixes G and H). The Personality Self-Portrait measures 14 personality styles which include: Vigilant, Solitary, Idiosyncratic, Adventurous, Mercurial, Dramatic, Self-Confident, Sensitive, Devoted, Conscientious, Leisurely, Aggressive, Self-Sacrificing, and Serious. The subsequent discussion focused upon Alan and Sandra's top three traits and how these affected the marriage in both positive and negative ways. Alan's top scores included Conscientious, Self-confident, and Solitary. Sandra's top three were Dramatic, Self-confident, and Conscientious.

The therapist asked Alan if he thought Sandra was a self-confident person. Alan said that he didn't think she was. The example he cited was when she went to a mother-daughter tea at church. Many of the women had tea sets which had been passed down to them through several

generations in their family line and Sandra was saddened that she had not experienced this blessing from her mother. Sandra reacted strongly to Alan's comment by clarifying that this had nothing to do with self-confidence and everything to do with feeling sad that she did not receive this connection to the past from her family of origin. Once again, Alan seemed to be out of touch with Sandra's feelings. The therapist helped her see that she could establish meaningful family traditions with her children - she could provide this for her daughter in the future. Although a connection to the past wasn't important to Alan, it was critical for him to understand that it was important for Sandra.

Another issue that emerged from the discussion was Alan's preference for solitude. This was listed on his test profile. As mentioned previously, Alan does not enjoy all the social functions and small talk that takes place at the church. He would rather be at home by himself. Sandra, on the other hand, enjoys all the social interaction and human networking but often feels that she must leave early for Alan's sake. There seemed to be some enmeshment between them so the therapist asked if it was appropriate for Alan to allow Sandra to attend some functions by herself while he stayed at home. Also

revealed in the discussion was that Alan does his own laundry while Sandra does the laundry for the rest of the household. He is a good provider but tends to take care of his own things his way. His focus upon his needs seemed selfish but it may not be important to them.

While talking to Alan and Sandra some new information about Alan's family background surfaced. He disclosed that one of the reasons they were living so far from their family of origin was because they wanted to get away from their family and make a new life for themselves. He said that all eight of his uncles were alcoholics and had other related problems in their lives. He disclosed that they were friendly to a person's face but deep down they were phony. He wanted no part of it.

Sandra indicated that her career and needs were secondary to Alan's. The therapist shared the stages in the family life cycle and suggested that the childrearing stage can be a time when one member of the marital subsystem has to put some aspects of their life on hold while making sacrifices for the benefit of the family. Their family life seems to be healthier from the sacrifices Alan and Sandra have made during this phase. In addition to child rearing, Sandra has been able to

maintain a part-time ministry position at their church which she finds very fulfilling.

Sandra indicated that her mother was going to come and live with them. In an earlier therapy session Sandra shared that she was afraid her mother would want to live with them. She was concerned because she had never had a close relationship with her mother and her mother might expect her to care for her handicapped half-brother.

Sandra didn't want to be taken advantage of since she had children of her own to raise. The therapist asked if she and Alan had agreed on this decision. Alan felt that it would not be a problem because his mother-in-law understood their boundaries and expectations. They would expect her to help with their children and to attend church with them. The therapist explored the idea that this might provide an opportunity for Sandra to develop a more intimate relationship with her mother that she had not experienced as a child, however, it was important that their boundaries be communicated clearly and understood.

### ***The Fifth Session***

Session five focused upon Alan and Sandra's *Couple and Family Map* (see Appendix H). In looking at the map, Alan indicated that his family of origin was somewhat

flexible and connected, and his relationship with Sandra was very flexible and connected. Both family of origin and couple relationship were in the balanced level, although his rating of their couple relationship was close to being overly flexible and his family of origin relationship was close to being inflexible. Alan felt that his mother was domineering and controlling. This might be the reason that Alan rated his family of origin as only somewhat flexible. He felt that Sandra was not strict enough with the children so this might account for rating their couple relationship as very flexible. When talking about his family of origin, Alan shared that he admired his father very much. He worked hard in order to give Alan's mother everything she wanted, but his mother just continued to drive him with more demands. He resented his mother for this and described her as having no boundaries, as being intrusive in regard to other's boundaries, and she was the cause of his father's alcoholism. (Remember Alan's uncles also struggle with alcoholism. Perhaps his father's alcoholism is the cause of his mother's controlling disposition and domineering style?) Alan would often have to go out to the car to see if his drunken father was safe. Alan must have been triangled in the middle between his parent's conflicts.

It became apparent that Alan resented his mother and he was angry when he talked about her. He resented that she tried to look good to others - successful - and didn't listen to his "no" but invaded his personal space. The geographical distance between them was a metaphor for the safe emotional distance between them.

On the other hand, Sandra rated her family of origin as very connected and somewhat flexible. She too was raised by a domineering grandmother - parent figure. Her grandmother networked the extended family relationships so Sandra felt this same need for closeness in her relationships. In contrast to Alan, she rated their couple relationship as inflexible and only somewhat connected. Several times Sandra indicated that Alan was too strict with the children and too structured to enjoy them. He didn't appreciate family time the same way that she did. She wanted them to enjoy the journey of life and not just focus on reaching goals and being successful. She desired a closer relationship with Alan, but he seemed to be oblivious to her need for intimacy. He felt that these issues were trivial compared to the hard work it had taken for them to get where they were in life. He failed to see that closeness was important to

Sandra though, and it was the reason for the emotional distance between them.

As the therapist explored this issue further it became apparent that Sandra often shared her feelings but Alan was unresponsive. She then felt rejected. The therapist asked Alan if he was aware that she felt rejected. He said that he was. The therapist asked if Alan wanted to punish Sandra through his indifference and Alan indicated that he did. Both Alan and Sandra are strong Christians so the therapist shared from Ephesians 5:22-33 about the sacrificial love of a husband and the submission of a wife. Was Alan showing sacrificial love when he rejected Sandra? Was Sandra able to submit when she didn't feel cared for? Much of Sandra's understanding of submission came from her conservative church background. She wanted to be a submissive wife so felt that she had to accept things as they were and just get over it. The therapist explored the implications that a wife is able to submit to a husband when she knows that he is attentive to her needs. This was in question between them. In addition, the therapist shared a principle from 1 Peter 3:7 about the importance of husbands dwelling with their wives in knowledge - in an understanding way. Did Alan understand Sandra's

emotional needs? Although it seemed that much of the therapy focused on Alan, a theme that kept reemerging was Alan's indifference to Sandra's feelings. Just because he felt good about something didn't mean the other members of his family shared the same feelings. He needed to pay attention to this dynamic.

The therapist observed that many of the qualities which Alan despised in his mother seemed to be present in some form in his own life. Therefore, the therapist concluded the session by asking Alan to ponder the questions, "What parent are you most like? In what ways are you and your mother alike?" They would address this question in their next session. The therapist left this session troubled by Alan's indifference toward Sandra, while feeling that some significant issues had been exposed.

### ***The Sixth Session***

A month passed before the couple could meet with the therapist for their final session. In the intervening time, Alan and Sandra did some personal reflection. At one point Alan phoned the therapist to disclose that he had experienced some new insights about himself so he eagerly anticipated their final session together. When the final session arrived, Alan was eager to share. He



said that the questions that the therapist had asked him at the conclusion of their last session really haunted him. He said that the therapist just kept pushing his buttons and the therapist's discernment exposed his inner heart. He said it bothered him when he realized that he might be like his mother in many ways. He did not like being controlling and pushy, self-centered, and proud, but he was. As he pondered this, his mother had called on the phone two days after the last session and in their discussion accused Alan of being stubborn like her. The irony of this, troubled him further. Because of this personal insight, he was attempting to lighten up and enjoy the journey with his family. He took his boys to some batting cages in the community in order to experience some father-son interaction. He wanted to appreciate some simple pleasures with them and teach them to do the same. Sandra affirmed that Alan was becoming more caring about her needs and those of the children.

The therapist asked how it was going having Sandra's mother come to live with them. Although she was not accustomed to so much structure, she was fitting in to their routine which was necessary in order for her to stay. Sandra said that she had a conflict with her mother. In the past they would have ignored the issue

and acted as if it didn't exist. Her mother would have become quiet and distant for a few days. But Sandra initiated contact with her mother by giving her a hug after the incident. It felt good to do this for the first time. Sandra said that she resented having to be the responsible parent with her mother, but she was working through it.

### ***An Evaluation of the Therapeutic Process***

It seems that marriage and family relationships will never be perfect this side of heaven because we have been damaged by the fall and we are predisposed to be self-centered and prideful. However, because of Christ's redemptive work on the cross, we are able to experience reconciliation to God with the potential to grow to spiritual maturity in Christ. Not only is reconciliation reflected in our relationship with God, but it is also demonstrated in our relationships within marriage and family life. The task of the therapist is to expose the deficiencies that people have learned from their family of origin which cause unhealthy maladaptive behavior, and to assist them in discovering healthy relational interaction.

Alan and Sandra are Christians who both deeply love the Lord. They are attempting to apply Christian

principles within their home life. Sometimes Christians are reluctant to reach out for professional assistance because of what others might think, yet there is value in enlisting a neutral professional to help identify unhealthy blind spots. While counseling with Alan and Sandra some maladaptive patterns were identified that were negative factors in their relationship. Some of these patterns were directly linked to their respective families of origin. Helping them identify these and make necessary changes was the task of therapy. Alan and Sandra are doing most things correctly. They are nurturing a loving relationship because of their relationship with Christ and their commitment to one another. They have persevered together through much adversity both relationally and professionally. In many ways they are a generation of firsts: The first to honor their marriage vows; the first to share a relationship in which both husband and wife are committed to Jesus Christ; the first of their generation to leave their city of birth and venture far away from everything familiar; and the first to earn college degrees. This therapist is optimistic that they will continue to grow and mature as a result of their commitment to the things they have learned. They are better equipped than their families of

origin to offer their children models of healthy relational functioning which will be a blessing for future generations.

### **Areas of Professional Development**

The Marriage and Family Therapy program at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary has proven to be a wonderful learning experience. Although I earned a B.A. in Psychology in my undergraduate work, most of the study was focused upon introductory psychological theory with very little practical application. Now I finally have the missing piece - the application of the theory!

Chapter 1 of the thesis required the student to develop a theological foundation for marriage and family life. This was a critical endeavor since beliefs form the therapist's worldview from which they will perform their work. Chapter 3 took secular psychological theories and integrated them with the Christian theology of Chapter 1. It is my belief that all truth is God's truth. If a therapist is to be effective in their work, they must address the spiritual as well as the psychological in order for lasting change and healing to take place with the people they serve.

Family Systems Theory was not introduced or discussed in my undergraduate psychology major. Therefore, the family systems approach of this Doctor of Ministry program has been an enlightening and practical way to embrace therapy and family dynamics. The idea

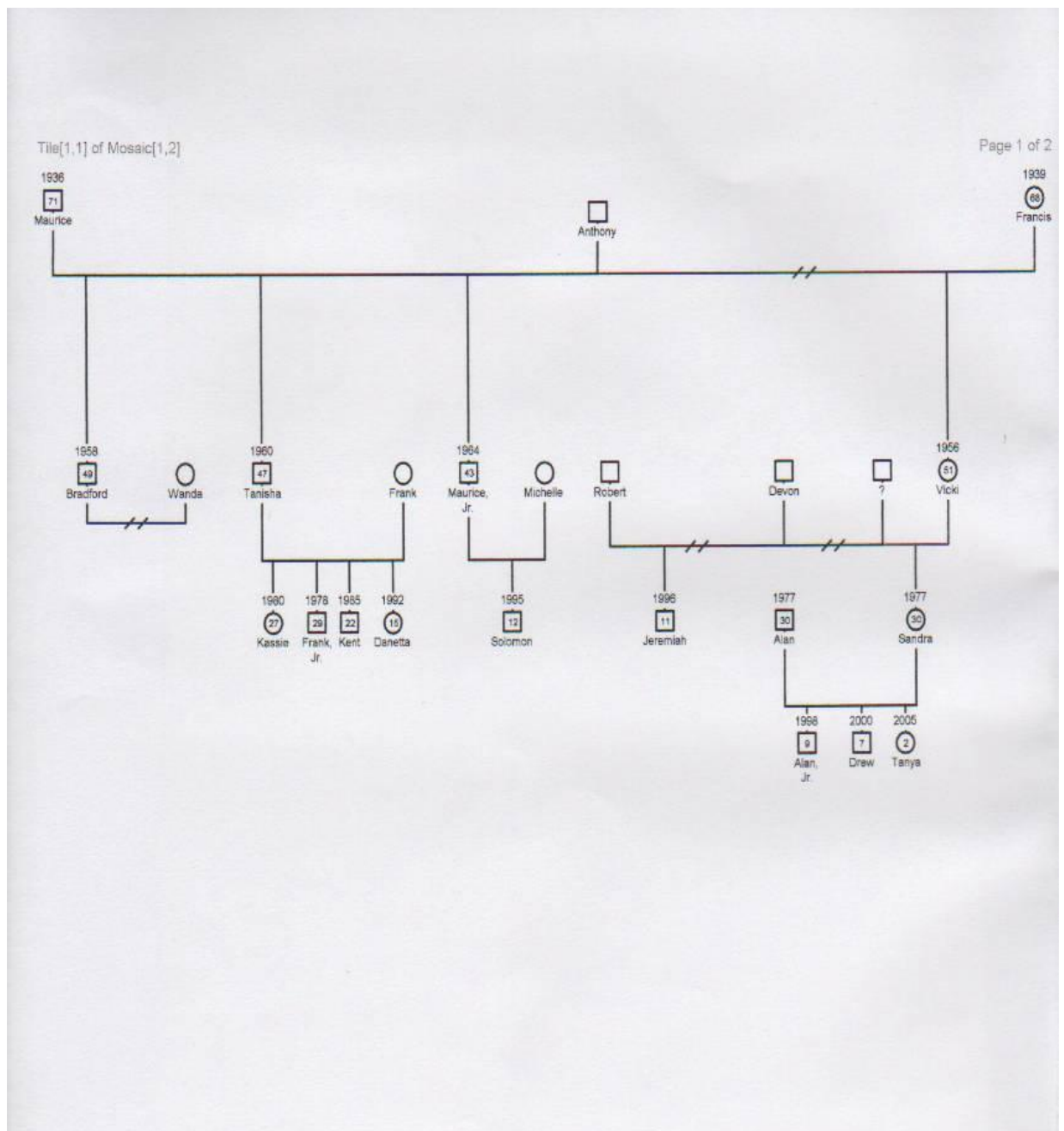
that the family is the patient and the identified patient is the symptom bearer of the family has been a new concept to consider. Encouraging the patient to focus upon the present instead of primarily seeking to unveil past hurts - common among psychodynamic theories - has been quite insightful. In addition, this study has equipped me to analyze Christian and secular therapy models, marital education programs, and therapy publications to identify the psychological schools of thought that the applications are based upon.

Several terms will continue to be part of my therapy tool box when making assessments. From Family Systems and Structural Family Therapy they include identified patient, family subsystems, differentiation, triangulation, enmeshment, fusion, closeness, distance, disengagement, flexibility, inflexibility, cohesion, coalitions, genograms, family maps, family life cycle, subsystems, homeostasis, and boundaries just to identify a few.

Cognitive Behavior Therapy and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy have contributed the concept that the way a person thinks has a direct affect upon the way they feel and behave. This underlying principle can be used to help the client analyze their maladaptive thoughts and

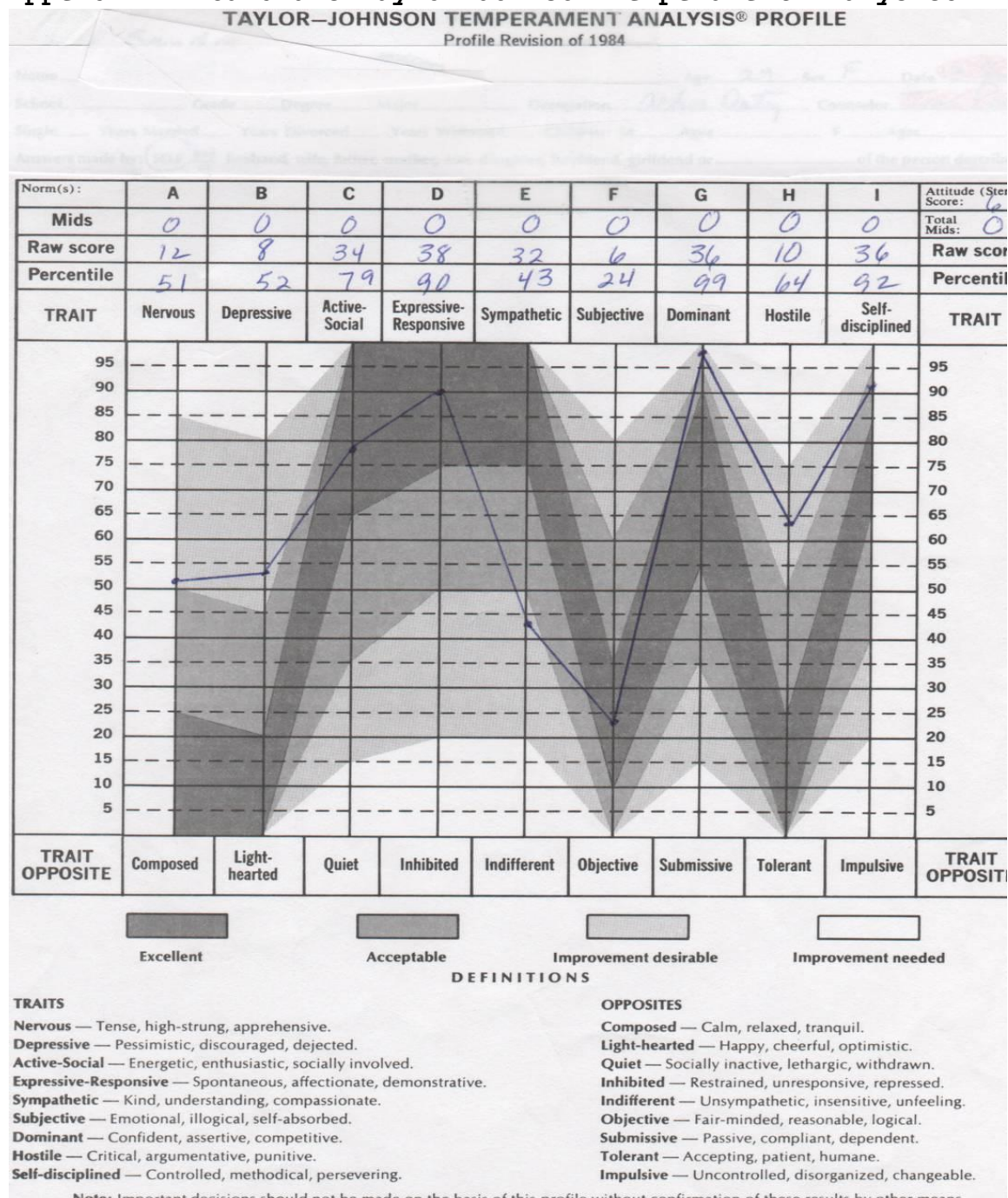
self-talk for accuracy when compared to reality. As an Air Force Chaplain, not only do I counsel many military personnel who are suffering with conflicted relationships, but increasingly I see airmen who are afflicted with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder due to deployments to combat zones. Cognitive Behavior Therapy has been proven to be effective when treating the root of these symptoms. Overall, the psychological theories and counseling techniques I have been exposed to in this Doctor of Ministry program have equipped me with new skills to take therapy to a whole new level for healing others.

## Appendix A: Sandra's Genogram





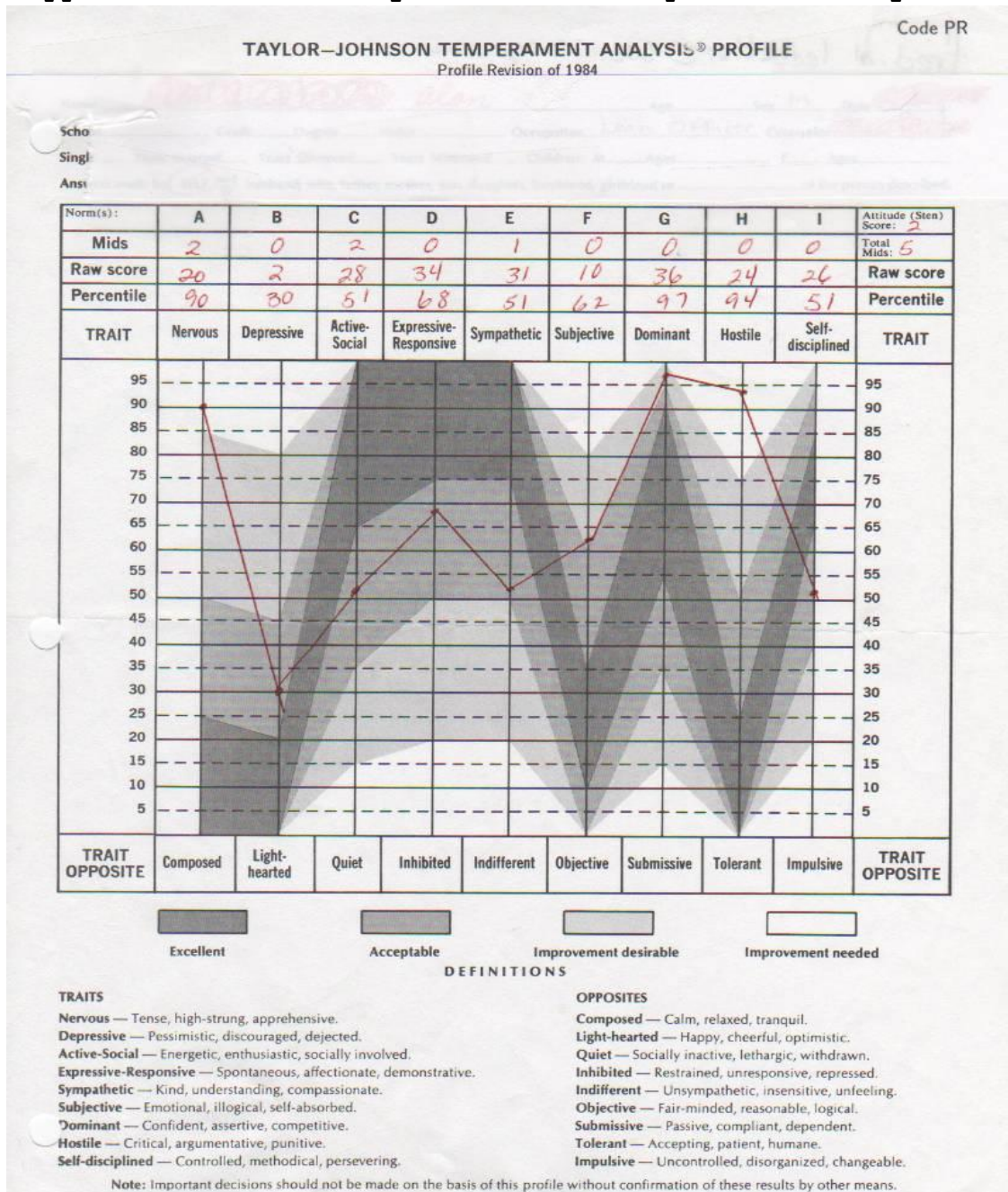
## Appendix B: Sandra's Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis®



Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis, Taylor, Robert M. and Morrison, Lucile Phillips, by Psychological Publications, Inc. P.O. Box 3577, Thousand Oaks, CA 91359-0577, USA. 1966-2007. Telephone 800-345-8378

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## Appendix C: Alan's Taylor-Johnson Temperament Analysis®



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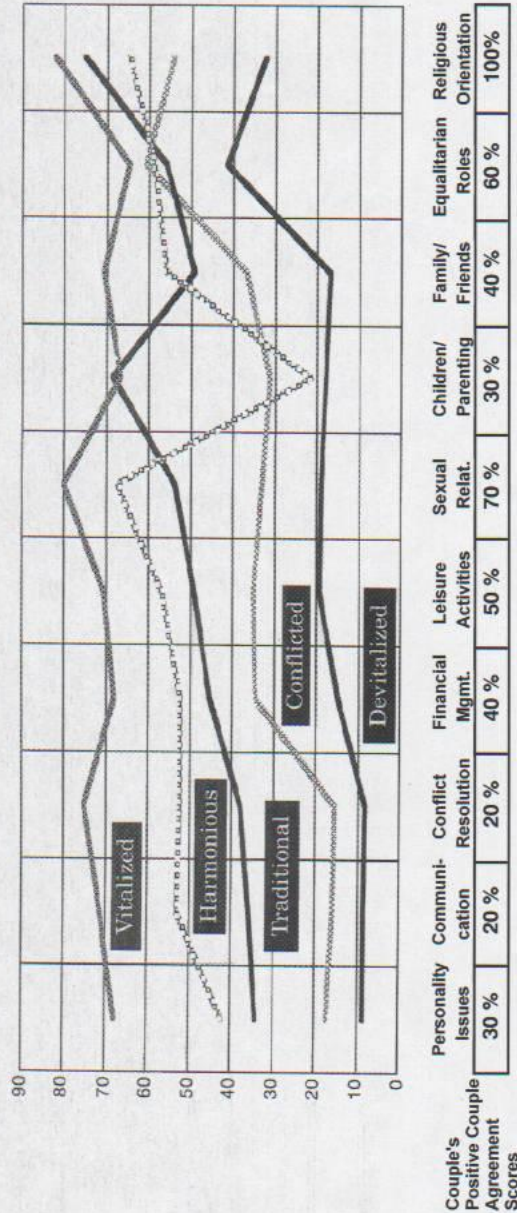
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## Appendix D: Types of Married Couples

### Types Of Married Couples

The graph below represents the Five Types of Married Couples based on the following article: Fowers, B.J. and Olson, D.H. (1993) Five types of marriage: Empirical Typology Based on ENRICH. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 1, 3, 196-207. This couple has not been plotted on this graph, but their Positive Couple Agreement scores are listed below.



The above graph represents the Five Types of Married Couples. Listed below each area are this couple's "Positive Couple Agreement" scores. This couple has not been plotted on the above graph. Based on this couple's "Positive Couple Agreement" scores the couple's style is closest to the following type listed below:

#### CONFLICTED COUPLE TYPE

Note: There may be one or two areas where their scores differ from the identified type.

This couple has few internal strengths in key areas. Consider additional sessions to strengthen the relationship.

#### SUGGESTIONS:

- + Build communication and conflict resolution skills.
- + If no progress and you are not a counselor, consider possible referral to a marital therapist.

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## **Appendix E: Scripture Verses for Assertiveness And Active Listening**

### **Empowering Couples Lesson 1: Improving Communication**

Biblical principles for improving communication:

#### **1. Assertiveness**

- Ephesians 4:15 Instead, Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.
- Ephesians 4:25-27 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.
- Ephesians 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.
- Ephesians 4:30-31 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.
- Ephesians 4:32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
- Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.
- Proverbs 17:27 A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.

- Proverbs 13:3 He who guards his lips guards his life, but he who speaks rashly will come to ruin.

## **2. Active Listening**

- Proverbs 18:13 He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame.
- Proverbs 19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, and in the end you will be wise.
- James 1:19 My dear brothers, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.
- Proverbs 10:10 When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.
- Proverbs 12:18 Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.
- Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.
- Proverbs 16:24 Pleasant words are a honey comb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

## Appendix F: Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict

### Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict

"Don't find fault, find a remedy."

—Henry Ford

Every couple has differences and disagreements. But healthy couples find ways to resolve marital disputes without turning them into marital wars. Couples who accept and appreciate the fact that their partner has independent opinions tend to reach successful and satisfying resolutions.

When you have issues that are ongoing, use this Ten Step approach to deal with them. The exercise may boost your success in ending issues that resist resolution.

As simple as the Ten Step exercise looks, remember it is not a game. Take time to work on all of the steps. Focus on one issue at a time and you will discover new solutions to old problems.

1. Set a time and place for discussion.
2. Define the problem or issue of disagreement.
3. How do you each contribute to the problem?
4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.
5. Brainstorm. List all possible solutions.
6. Discuss and evaluate these possible solutions.
7. Agree on one solution to try.
8. Agree on how each individual will work toward this solution.
9. Set up another meeting. Discuss your progress.
10. Reward each other as you each contribute toward the solution.

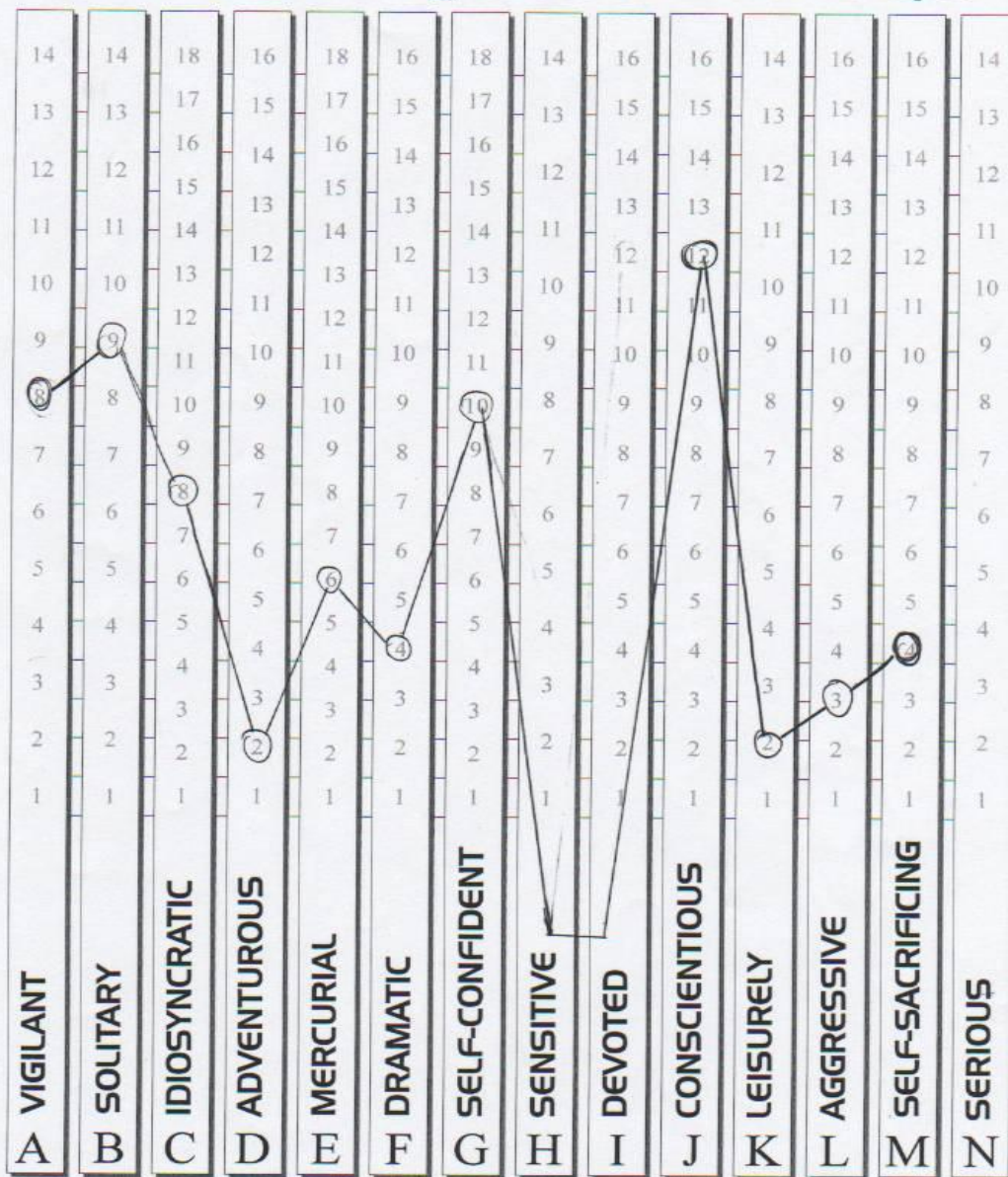
*PREPARE/ENRICH Program*

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# Appendix G: Alan's Personality Self-Portrait

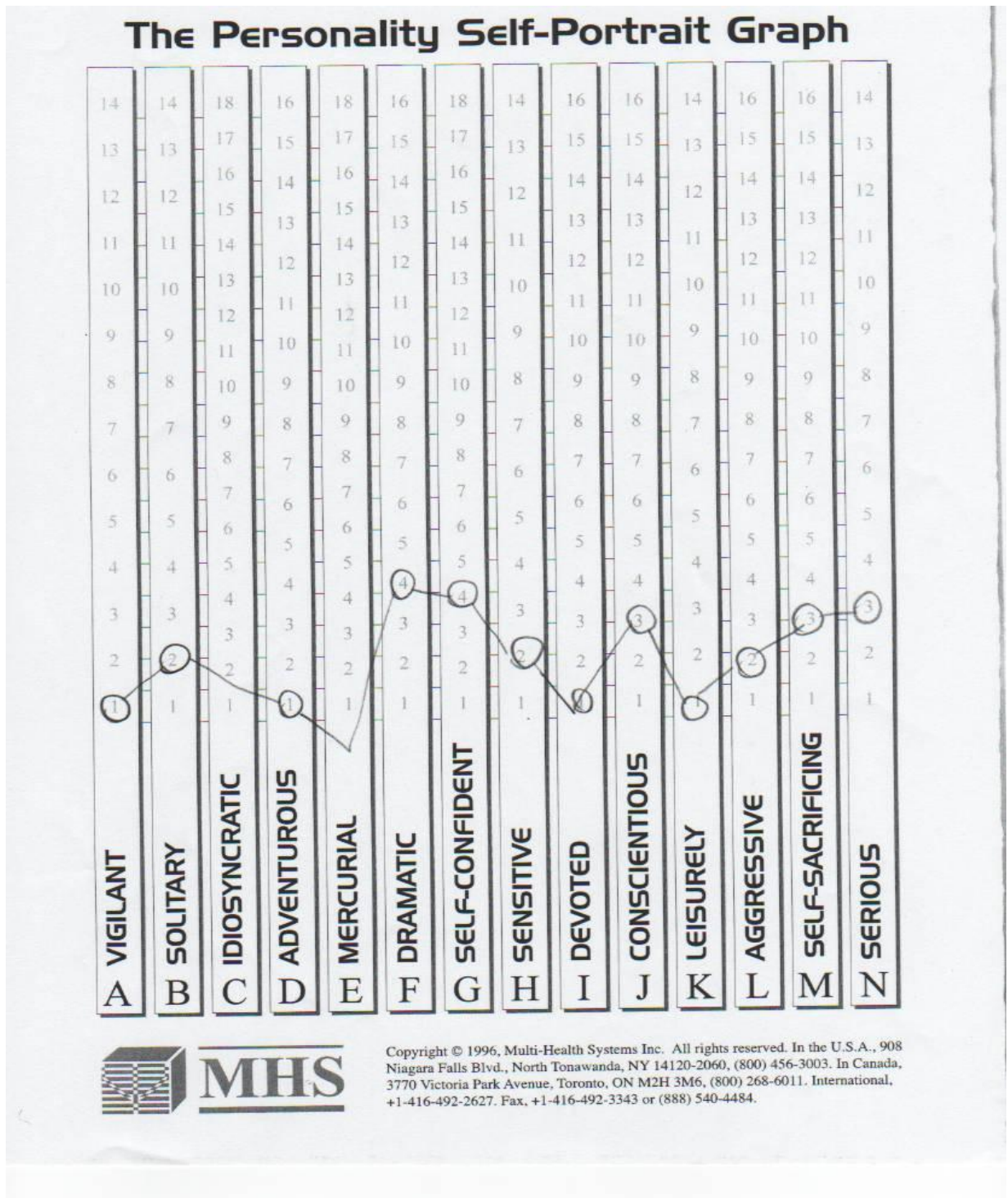
## The Personality Self-Portrait Graph



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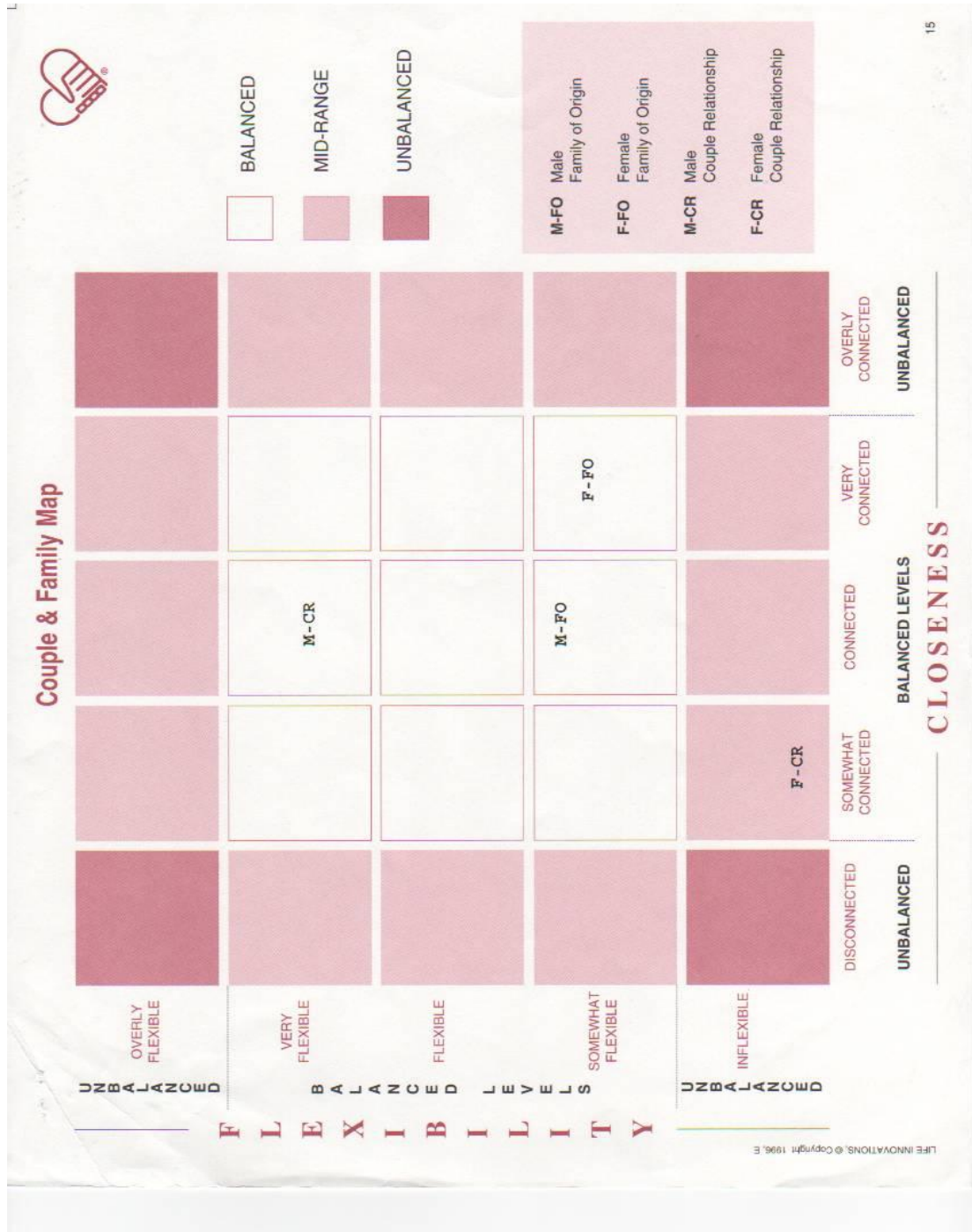
## Appendix H: Sandra's Personality Self-Portrait



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## Appendix I: Couple and Family Map



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